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PSE2

THE PLAYER'S GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF PLAYSTATION

VOLUME 1• ISSUE 3 • DECEMBER 00

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PSE2

THE PLAYER'S GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF PLAYSTATION

Volume 1 • Issue 3 • December 2000

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PSE2 is published monthly by Dimension Publishing, Inc. 1175 Chess Drive, Suite E, Foster City, CA 94404. PERIODICALS POSTAGE RATES PAID at San Mateo, CA and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to PSE2, 1175 Chess Drive, Suite E, Foster City, CA 94404. Newstand distribution is handled through Curtis Circulation Services. For customer service, write: PSE2 Customer Service Department 1175 Chess Drive, Suite E, Foster City, CA 94404. All editorial product information should be addressed to same. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned or acknowledged. Entire contents copyright ©2000, Dimension Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. "PSE2" is a trade name of Dimension Publishing, Inc. Products in these pages are trade names or trademarks of their respective companies. Dimension Publishing, Inc. and PSE2 Magazine are not affiliated with Sony Computer Entertainment of America or the companies or products contained herein. PlayStation and the PlayStation logos are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment, Inc. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A. YOU DIDN'T REALLY THINK YOU'D HEARD THE LAST OF THE CHICKENS, NOW, DID YOU?

THE ISSUE at HAND

By the time you read this, one of two things will have happened. The first scenario (and the much better of the two) is that, on October 26th, you sauntered down to your local Electronics Boutique (or similar-style video game retailer) with a smile on your face, a skip in your walk and a pre-order confirmation in hand, and picked up your sleek and sexy new PlayStation2, along with a couple of games (and the newest issue of PSE2, right?). You then went home, where all of your jealous friends were waiting for you and, like any selfish gamer would do, played Madden, SSX, Smuggler's Run, Summoner and Tekken Tag Tournament all night long, only letting your friends play after you have had your turn first. Let us be the first to congratulate and salute you for having the foresight to plan ahead and cover all of your bases. The second, more bleak scenario, has you haphazardly driving from store-to-store, with a look of pure desperation in your eyes and foamy spittle gathered in the corners of your mouth, hoping to find a retailer that either isn't filling their pre-orders first, or has received more than the paltry four or five units they were allocated because of the reduction. After spending hours hopelessly trying to track a unit down, you turn around with shoulders hunched in disappointment, head home and join the group of other jealous friends over at scenario one guy's house, where you'll then begrudgingly wait your turn to play Madden, SSX, Smuggler's Run, Summoner and Tekken Tag Tournament. Let us say we feel your pain. Hopefully you're not prone to giving up easily and, having learned your lesson, put your name on multiple lists for the next round. Sony will be doing their best to ship a hundred thousand PS2s to retailers per week through Christmas so, with a little patience, you should get your hands on one soon enough.

At least the dedicated staff of PSE2 can help both of you out, by aiding you in planning which games are worth spending your hard-earned cash on. In this issue alone, we review a whopping total of 34 PS and PS2 games. We also have news and previews on some of the biggest PlayStation2 games coming in the near future, including Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver 2, Twisted Metal Black, Onimusha Warlords, NFL GameDay 2001, Star Wars Starfighter, Rayman Revolution, Tomb Raider Next Gen, and many, many more. Being hardcore (even fanatical) gamers ourselves, we know very well the feeling of needing to have and play the latest and newest stuff first-- why do you think we started doing this magazine in the first place way back when?! For those of you who have one, we hope you enjoy your new PlayStation2s and, for those of you still impatiently waiting, we're sure you'll be holding your very own DualShock2 in your sweaty hands soon enough.

Thanks for reading, we'll see you next month.

GREG
off@psextreme.com

EDITOR BIOS

GREG OFF

Greg decided to dedicate this editorial space this month to complain about United Airlines who, once again, kept him at the airport for almost nine hours due to a "radar problem". He personally thinks that, instead of sending out apology letters every time this happens, they should, instead, provide free GameBoy colors and copies of Zelda to help pass the time away.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Midnight Club
Smuggler's Run
Rayman Revolution
Evil Dead: Hail to the King

GARY STRASSBERG

Gary recently had a nasty encounter with a pimply-faced EB cashier, who accused the magazine of "sucking up to Sony" by giving every PS2 game a glowing review. Naturally, Gary made him eat those words by pointing out that Sky Surfer received a dismal 1% rating. It must suck being a trash-talkin' loser doomed to a retail career!

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Tekken Tag
Smuggler's Run
Cool Boarders 2001
Dragon Valor

DARIEN ALLEN

Darien came out to visit us at the office and reminded us what loving video games is all about. With his flight leaving at 12:00 pm, he checks out of his hotel at 5:00 am and drives down to the office so he can spend a few hours with our pre-release PlayStation2 software. THAT'S dedication — or craziness.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

FFIX
Silent Scope
Capcom vs SNK

DAVE WINDING

Dave has spent the better part of his life over the past month writing the Timesplitters strategy guide. He is ready for some new games. Please, won't somebody help him? Although he has been playing almost nothing else, his "currently playing" list is actually his "wish he were currently playing" list.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Covert Ops Essent
TWINE
Test Drive V-Rally
SSX
Midnight Club
Smuggler's Run

TIM LINDQUIST

When all the other kids were out with the grown-ups singing the Sunday hymns, Tim was hiding in the supply closet, madly emptying packets of powdered hot cocoa mix into his big, fat mouth. Now, he's in charge of production at a major magazine publishing company... and when no one is looking... he still likes to sneak into the supply room for a quick cocoa sprinkle.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Unreal Tournament
Speed Buggy
Buzz Lightyear
Discs of Tron
Elite Forces
Zookeeper

MARK ANDROVICH

Mark decided to celebrate finishing his third strategy guide in as many months by taking it easy for awhile. That's why he reviewed 13 games this issue— a new company record! He has yet to review his first PS2 game, however, and worries that he is becoming the new "toddler game" guy.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Crash Bash
Virtua Tennis
TWINE
Spyro 3

ERIC WINDING

Eric has finally seen the light, and is playing PS2 games with every waking moment. That may sound like a lot of time, but the reality is that Eric sleeps more than your average house cat (about 22 hours per day), and thus, only has time for a quick game of FIFA and Midnight Club. When not sleeping or playing games, Eric can be found napping.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

FIFA 2001
Dave Mirra BMX
NBA Live 2001
Wild Wild Racing
Elmo's Letter Adv

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IN STORES NOVEMBER 2000

PlayStation

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INFOGRAMES™

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Mail 10
We like to hear from our readers and we like to have nice chats with them about stuff. Mostly, we get a lot of mail about the PS2, but sometimes we also get mail asking lifestyle questions. We answer them all, no bull, all straight up. It's tight.

News 14
When it comes down to it, most people like to read a bit of interesting info about things that concern gaming. That's where we deliver big and it's one of our strengths. We're a proud people, us magazine maker-folk.

Codes 18
We like to show the mostest, bestest codes there are every issue. This time we have some really tight codes to deliver, including some PS2 import codes and some regular PSone codes and whatnot.

Peripherals 20
Check out our peripheral section this month where we review-up some good ol' controllers, a fine lookin' cheat thing for the PS2 and some arse-kickin' mammary cards, uh, memory cards, too.

Cover Story 22
If you're hurting for FPS action to go along with your newly acquired PS2 computer entertainment system and DVD player box, we want to tell you about this one. It's called Time Splitters and it's neat. Read on, dear readers.

Features 26
See, there was this bro, named Razial or something, and he died. Now he's all half decayed and chit and he lost his lower jaw. Now he's real freaked out and wants to wipe out a lot of other dead folks or something. Check it out.

Features 30
So, there won't be any Resident Evil for PS2 any time soon, so instead you should check out Onimusha Warlords because it's the same frigg'n' thing but with scary looking dudes in samurai skirts and hats. It's just like RE, though, so check it out.

Features 32
If you watched that Episode 1 movie and got a real urge to go out in space and shoot up other folks who are also in space, then you should be pretty happy to see that they made a game about it. We'll give you the real info on page 32, so go read that.

Previews 36
It's all about PS2 previews right here. We used all our usual methods for getting shots and info about games that will come out later. There's around 12 games we bring you this issue, which should be plenty.

Reviews 40
From here on in, it's a big solid block of review happiness. We went a little bit nuts this issue and reviewed, like, ten zillion games, for both PS1 and PS2. Really. Check out starting at page 40 and see how there's all reviews, right on through to page 59. Whoa.

DVD 60
There's something special about being able to watch DVD movies right on your PS2, isn't there? Why yes, there is. So, we're going to go right ahead and review some excellent DVD movies that you might want to check out because they're pretty cool. Serious.

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HOT TOPIC

I give Sony a lot of credit for making video games more appealing to the general public over the past five years. The PlayStation, coming from a well-known consumer electronics corporation, brought respectability to the hobby in a way that systems from Sega and Nintendo could not. And yet, judging from recent press releases, there is still a long way to go. The PlayStation 2 was just named the hottest toy for this Christmas season by the consumer shopping guide Toy Wishes. Note that I didn't say computer entertainment system, or even video game, but "toy." Sigh...

As the older computer illiterate generation passes on, and the first generation to experience video games grows up, it is inevitable that video games will become mainstream. Games will be recognized as legitimate entertainment in just the same way that movies, music, and books are. We're not there yet, but here are some signs to look for.

You'll know that video games have become mainstream when:

1. Tony Hawk Pro Skater's music selections include swing, polkas, and waltzes.

2. Lara Croft visits Pamela Lee's plastic surgeon for a breast reduction and starts wearing more sensible clothing.

3. Video game reviewers become as well-known as Siskel & Ebert.

4. PlayStation Underground disks become more plentiful than AOL's "50 Hours Free" disks.

5. A shuffleboard, chess, fishing or bowling video game reaches the TRST Top 10 chart.

6. Colleges teach courses on "video game appreciation."

7. System names are represented by simple numbers and letters, not words such as "dream," "play," "cube," "wonder," "station," or "game."

8. Video game advertisements no longer contain the words "kick," "kill," "maim," "destroy," or "dead" and Reader's Digest and Town & Country magazines run ads by Capcom.

9. Oprah starts a "game of the month" club.

10. Time, Newsweek, and The New York Times all have full-time video game journalists on staff.

Mark Androvich

Dear PSE2,

What's up? First of all, great mag! I subscribed to OPM about 6 months ago before I was aware of your magazine. I picked one up a while ago and I was very impressed. Only then did I realize my mistake. I would like to say that I am not going to renew my OPM subscription and am instead going to subscribe to PSE2. Sure, the demo CDs are cool, but they jack the subscription price way up, and your mag is much better. Keep it up!

I am now going to take my lips off your butts long enough to tell you the real reason I am writing. I first reserved a PS2 at Electronics Boutique around the end of February. I thought that would be early enough to guarantee I would receive one on the 26th, but since that time they have told me that I still might be on shaky ground. They said that since they are receiving only limited quantities that they are going to take care of the people that are paid in full first. Even that won't guarantee me one though. I became worried so I found several stores in my area that are not taking preorders and are instead doing a first-come-first-served type deal (Best Buy, Family Toy Warehouse, Game Stop, etc.). What I would like your advice on is this: Would I be better off paying off my reservation at Electronics Boutique and hoping for the best, or camping out at one of the less mainstream stores a couple of hours before they open? Nobody has been able to tell me how many they will be getting except for Game Stop (about 10). I have already invested in reserving TTT, a memory card, and a DVD remote and I would hate having them sit around in my room with nothing to do because I have to wait a few more months for a PS2. Any advice would be appreciated.

Thanks for your time,
Travis Redding

That's a hard decision to make. Sony had a press conference recently to announce that they would only be shipping 500,000 units on day 1 instead of their previous estimate of 1,000,000 units. If you have the funds to do it, perhaps you should keep your preorder with EB and also camp out at one of the smaller stores and buy one there, too. Worst case, you can sell your extra to someone who couldn't get one. Good luck.

Dear PSE2,

I have the new PSE2 magazine and at the back of the mag where Take2Games has their ad, they have the Ford Racing game ad. But where it should have some catchy catch phrase to sell that game, they have what they wrote for Action Bass. Also on the same page for the game Darkstone where they should have another catchy catch phrase, they wrote the same thing for the game Ball Breakers. So my question is why would they let such a simple mistake get out.

Please let me know how this kind of stuff gets past the Editor. Do I get a prize for noticing that kind of stuff? And I know that there are a few mistakes in this letter, but I don't have someone who gets paid to look over my work.

Robert Martin

They called us the day after we had printed asking if we could take some new ad film, but it was too late. Those kind of things happen all the time when deadlines need to be met. No prizes, sorry!

Dear PSE2,

LYLYM! Just wanted to point out, however, that in your October '00 issue of PSE2, you respond to James' question about why Final Fantasy Tactics was discontinued by saying that Square just hasn't announced any future titles. You missed the point I'm afraid. Final Fantasy Tactics is labeled as "Discontinued" by retailers, meaning they can no longer supply their stores with this product. I believe he may be trying to find a copy of the game, but your chances of finding a new copy of the game aside from auctions is a rare bet.

Thank you for your time,
- John D. Norman

Ah-ha. You're right. When that's the situation, it's usually because the manufacturer doesn't get enough re-orders from retailers to be able to do another production run.

Dear PSE2,

Will the PS2 be able to be modified like PS1 to play foreign games? How much would such Mod chips, if available, cost?

Thanks
Carl

Honestly, we don't know. We've learned to never under-estimate the ingenuity of software pirates (they're the ones who drive the demand for such a thing), so we won't rule out the possibility. As of this writing, we haven't heard of any, but the US launch is still about 2 weeks away, so one may surface sometime after the launch. As for the cost of such a thing, it'll have to be pretty cheap to appeal to the cash-poor software pirate demographic.

Dear PSE2,

I just picked up the latest issue/first issue of your mag. I almost missed it though. I didn't expect it to be oversized, I had forgotten the name was changed to PSE2 & no gaming mag costs less than $4.99.

I found the news about the European PS2 shipments quite distressing and I fear the same will happen here. I was already frustrated that both "Dark Cloud" and "Bouncer " had been pushed back. I want you to know how on the ball you people are. Twice I went to "a gaming store" to change a pre-ordered game to another. Both times I was asked why and both times I said that the title was no longer a release title. The first time the employees (avid gamers themselves) scoffed as I said "I read it in PSExtreme." Then one person checked their computer and sure enough "Dark Cloud" had been pushed back. The other time with "Bouncer" the employee said that they had just heard, but I had known for a while on both accounts because of your reports. Every magazine has info & reviews that the others have. But the one magazine I rely on for gaming & PS2 news is yours. You give more exclusive & accurate reports than anyone else, including "The Official" magazine.

Well, good work so far & I look forward to even more with the second coming of the PlayStation with PS2 (or third coming if you count PS-One, which I don't, it's the equivalent of an issue #1/2 in the world of comics). Oh, one last thing, thanks for the code to unlock MGS2: Sons Of Liberty. It made my day & increased my anticipation for the release of what, I believe, will be one of the greatest video games on any system ever. Gosh, 41 years old & I still sound like such a fanboy.

Sincerely,
JZ Zaranka

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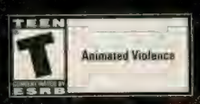

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THE EMPEROR'S
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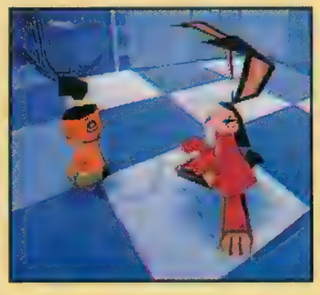
Sir Napoleon

Sir Maximilian I

Sir Kuzco (duh...it's me.)

Sir Rudolf II



PlayStation®

FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

NEWS EDITOR: DAVE WINDING

IT'S LARA... ONLY BETTER!

Eidos recently supplied us with a few new shots of Lara in her upcoming PS2 adventure. If you look closely, you may notice that things appear, uh... rounder than they have in the past. While it is obvious that these shots have been given out to show us how good Lara looks and are NOT a depiction of actual gameplay, they are still quite impressive. According to the folks at Core, the new game may not even feature "Tomb Raider" in the title. So, what we have here are basically technology shots and may never actually appear in the game, although the model has been created using the game engine.

FRONT BUMPERS

REAR BUMPERS

PSST... HEY BUDDY, WANT A PS2?

Well, if you got the shaft at your local retailer, you probably already have experienced first-hand the product shortages created at retail by Sony's shipping less than half of the expected PS2 supply on October 26. That's right, only about 500,000 units made it to retail, the majority of which never actually made it to store shelves. Through aggressive pre-order systems by different on-line and brick-and-mortar retailers (just curious: when was the last time you saw a mall retail store made out of anything but sheet metal and Gypsum board?), the half-mil were committed long ago. In fact, I ordered one from Gamestop.com back in May and didn't receive it (although EBworld.com came through on one I pre-ordered in June... I guess we all know where do to our on-line shopping). According to the folks at Sony, there is good news coming. In the weeks leading up to Christmas day, they expect to ship an additional 800,000 — thus reaching their previously stated target of 1.3 million units at retail for the holiday shopping season. Don't panic! You still might have a shot.

PS2 GAMEDAY READY TO GO?

After months of speculation regarding the future of Sony's NFL GameDay franchise, the pigskin has been let out of the bag. The PS2 version of NFL GameDay 2001 will ship on November 14. Basically, what you are going to get is a graphically improved version of NFL GameDay 98 (arguably the best-playing of the series). Of course, while it does look better, technologically it does not look to be up to the standard set by PS2 Madden. But, pretty pictures don't always tell the entire story, do they? The GameDay franchise has been built on a tremendous gameplay experience and we are expecting that the PS2 version will keep to these high standards, even if the graphic environment is not exactly cutting edge. Will it be enough to keep the faithful happy and to bash heads with Madden? Hopefully, we will be able to get our hands on the game and answer that question next month.

FREAKS AND GEEKS

Ah... Hollywood — where every fruit is a little nutty and every nut is a little fruity. Having just returned from the ultimate combination of freaks (Hollywood posers — names with no talent that appear at events in the hope of landing work) and geeks (a humble-but-lovable term for those of us in the video game industry) at the PS2 launch party in southern California, I had to give you a glimpse of the inside. Imagine a group of people from the video game industry standing around discussing the ins and outs of development on PS2 and some new action-adventure game, only to see the entire group pause as a "guy" dressed like Yul Brenner with heavy multi-colored eye makeup glides by and a he-she is spotted in a full-length fur coat. Geez, and all I wanted to do was have a couple of beers and play a little GameDay...

ABE'S EXODUS II

In an interesting little story that really brings to light the fact that you simply can't get a press release and report it as fact, Oddworld Inhabitants, creators of Abe's Oddworld Oddysee and its sequel, Abe's Exodus, have announced that their planned PS2 title, Munch's Oddysee, is being canceled and taken over to X-Box. Of course, Microsoft has yet to make this announcement, so you can gather what a coup they think that this is. Of course, is this really news, or simply a developer looking to get themselves out of hot water? The folks at Oddworld have complained VERY publically about their difficulties in developing for PS2 — but they seem to be the only ones.

According to a number of PS2 developers that we have spoken with, they believe that Oddworld are having trouble getting up to speed on PS2 because they never developed a 3D game on PS1 (both Abe's games were side-scroll affairs). They also feel that, because the game was so late, Oddworld believes they have a chance to be early with original content on X-Box, something that Microsoft desperately needs and will probably pay big bucks for.

In any event, it's too bad, because the game concept was looking promising. But, get used to it. Now that developers and publishers can present the pretty pictures in real-time 3D that they have always dreamed of... they actually have to do it. There are many artists and programmers out there that have made a living skating by in this industry. When you are going up against the talent and resources of the Squares, Naughty Dogs, Rares, etc. of the world in the next generation, you are going to have to bring your "A" game (in both technology and art) and your Visa card (joke — lots of cash required to deliver AAA title), or take your marbles and go home.

In other words, there isn't a place for games like Superman or Roadsters in the new gaming climate.

TRST TOP SELLING TITLES

FOR THE WEEK OF 10/1/00

1 — Activision's Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2	2 — EA's Madden NFL 2001	3 — Activision's Tony Hawk Pro Skater	4 — Sony's Gran Turismo 2	5 — Activision's Spider-Man
last month: ** average retail price: $41	last month: 1 average retail price: $41	last month: 2 average retail price: $26	last month: 3 average retail price: $27	last month: 4 average retail price: $41
6 — Take 2's Spec Ops	7 — GT Interactive's Driver	8 — THQ's WWF Smackdown	9 — Acclaim's Dave Mirra BMX	10 — Namco's Tekken 3
last month: 6 average retail price: $9	last month: 5 average retail price: $23	last month: 8 average retail price: $39	last month: ** average retail price: $41	last month: ** average retail price: $23

** Not in Top 10 Last Month. The ratings reflected above are those of Dimension Publishing and do not represent the opinions of NPD TRSTS.
Source: NPD TRSTS Video Games Tracking Service, 900 West Shore Road, Port Washington, NY 11050 • (516) 625-2294

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TEEN T Animated Violence
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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ROCKSTAR 5758WY
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PlayStation®2

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STREET RACING

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SEND US YOUR CODES AND WIN BIG PRIZES!

Each month, we'll pick out a code sent in by our loyal and intelligent readers and send that person a whole bunch of really cool stuff from MonsterCable! If you're the lucky winner, you'll get their excellent GameLink 200 AV Cable featuring nitrogen gas-injected dielectric insulator delivering maximum video signal strength for the clearest, sharpest picture possible, and the GameLink 300 S-Video AV Cable for even sharper, more crisp video then the standard composite cable, and the LightWave 100 Fiber Optic to take advantage of the PlayStation 2's Dolby Digital and DTS capabilities and lastly, the PowerStation 600 with 700 joules of surge protection to protect your baby! Wow! Those are some awesome prizes you can win for just sending in codes!

WE HAVE A WINNER!

This month's lucky winner is Virgil Walker from Honalulu, HI. Congrats!

Tony Hawk's 2

Special meter always full
Pause the game, then press and hold L1 and press ✕, △, ○, ○, ↑, ↑, △, □

Full stats
To raise your skater's attributes to 10. Pause the game, then press and hold L1 and then press ✕, △, ○, □, △, ↑, ↑

Turbo mode
To increase the speed of the game by 25%. Pause the game, then press and hold L1 and then press ↓, □, △, ↑, ↑, ○, ↑, □, △, ↑, ↑, ○.

Neversoft skaters
Go to the main menu, press and hold L1 and then press ↑, □, □, △, →, ↑, ○, △. The wheel will spin if entered correctly. Then, enter create skater mode and enter any name from the Neversoft development team. The names can be found in the back of the instruction manual.

Blood mode
To turn the blood mode on and off. Pause the game, then press and hold L1 and then press ↑, ↑, □, △.

CONTEST RULES: Anyone of any age can enter. The only people not eligible to win are employees of Dimension Publishing or Monster Cable, their friends, family, pets and anyone they talk to or know of. Dimension Publishing reserves the right to make any and all decisions regarding the contest. One winner per month will be chosen, at Dimension Publishing's discretion, based on the code or trick supplied by the entrant.

Eternal Ring PS2 (import)

The Ultimate Code
Press ○, ✕, △, □, □, ○, △, at the Start Menu.

Sky Surfer PS2 (import)

Perform all these tricks during gameplay.

Rolling Barrel Left
✕, ○, ○, ✕

Menhouse Surprise trick move
□, △, ✕

Open Touring Car
□, □, □, ○

The Plate
△, ✕, △, ✕

Tidy Bowel In The Hole
□, ✕, ○, ✕

Scorpion trick move
○, △, ✕

Bending Reed
△, □, ✕, ○

Propeller
□, △, ✕, ○

Free Fall
△, ✕, ✕, △

Burner Speed
○, ○, ○, □

Snow Ball
△, □, □, ○

Avalanche
△, ○, ○, □

Rolling Barrel Right
✕, □, □, ✕

DoA 2 PS2 (import)

Full option screen
Press Start during the game then ✕ and △ at the same time.

Big heads
Beat the game with any character, then at the start screen, press and hold ✕, ○, □, △, ↑. You will hear a sound.

Unlimited Lives
Go the main menu, press and hold R2 then press ✕ and △ start a new game and save it then you'll have Unlimited lives.

Spiderman

Enter all the codes below at the Cheats menu.

Max Health DCSTUR
Access Unlimited Webbing SRUDL
Spidey 2099 Costume TWNTYNDN
Ben Reilly Costume BNREILLY
Access Everything EEL NATS
Become Invincible RUSTCRST
Big Head DULUX
Level Select XCLSIOR
Six Comics ALLSIXCC
DeBug Mode LLADNEK
Storyboard view CGOSSETT
Access Cinematics WATCH EM
View Characters w/ Viewer CVIEW EM
Bagman Costume AMZBGMAN
Spidey Costume PARALLEL
Spidey Symbiote Costume BLKSPIDR
Captain Universe Costume S COMIC
Peter Parker Costume MJS STUD
Quick Change Costume ALMSTPKR
Scarlet Spidey Costume LETTER S

Duke Nukem: Babes

Enter the following codes at the cheats screen

Level select ○, ✕, □, □, ✕, □, ○.
Invincibility L1, □, ○, ○, □, L1, L2.
All weapons R2, ✕, L1, □, R1, ○, L2.
Infinite ammunition L2, ○, R2, □, ○, L2, R1.
Double damage □, □, □, ○, ○, ○, ✕.
Temporary invincibility L1, L1, L1, L1, L1, L1, R2.
Invisibility □, ✕, ○, □, ✕, ○, □.
Full ego R1, R1, ○, ○, L1, L1, R2.
Wacky FMV sequences L1, L2, R1, R2, ○, ○, □, □.
Full armor L1, L1, R1, R1, ✕, ✕, ○, ○.
First person view L2, R1, L1, R2, ○, ✕, □.
Big head Duke □, □, ✕, ○, ○, ✕, □.
Small head Duke □, ✕, ○, ○, ✕, □, □.
Big head enemies ✕, ✕, R1, ✕, L1, ✕.
Small head enemies ✕, L1, ✕, R1, ✕, ✕.
Outtake FMV sequences L1, L2, R1, R2, □, □, ○, ○.
Ending FMV sequence ○, R2, L1, □, L2, ✕, R2.

Dino Crisis 2

Infinite ammunition
Complete the game after collecting all eleven Dino files.

Unlock the Dino Coliseum
Complete the game to unlock the Dino Coliseum.

Extra Dino Duel dinosaurs
Purchase Gail, Rick and the Tank for the Extra Crisis games to unlock another set of dinosaurs at the character selection screen for purchase.

Parasite Eve 2

Bounty and replay modes
Complete the game to unlock bounty and replay modes.

Scavenger (supportless) mode
Complete the game with at least 69001 EXP to unlock scavenger mode.

GunBlade weapon
Complete the game with an S rank. The GunBlade from Final Fantasy 8 will be available in replay mode for 10,000 BP. Press R1 to swing it at an opponent, then press R2 to shoot when it hits an opponent.

Nightmare mode
Complete scavenger mode to unlock nightmare mode.

Hyper Velocity weapon
Complete the game with an A rank. The Hyper Velocity weapon will become available in replay mode for 20,000 BP.

Monk Robe
Complete the game with an L rank. The Monk Robe armor will become available in replay mode for 3,000 BP.

Hot Shots Golf 2

Secret Characters
To get the secret characters beat them in versus mode.

Huge Clubs
During tee-off press and hold R2 then press □, ○, ↑, ↑, ↓, ○

Unlock Everything
Enter 2GSH as your player name to unlock everything.

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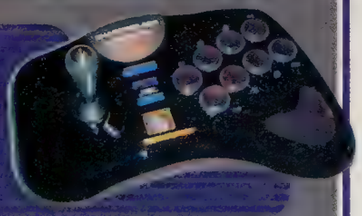
PlayStation
EVERYONE
E
Animated Violence
DESTRUCTION DERBY RAW
PlayStation

PERIPHERALS

Now that the PS2 has finally made its way to American shores, a whole new wave of accessories is being released for Sony's new super console. In upcoming issues, we'll be reviewing everything from the latest DVD remotes to PS2 racing wheels, and a whole lot more. Most of these devices (except the DVD remotes) also work fine with the PS one, so there's truly something for everyone. For instance, this month we tested two excellent PS2 controllers that work well with both systems, so keep reading for all the important details.

Shadowblade Arcade Stick



Manufacturer: InterAct
MSRP: $59.99

Sleek and shiny like polished obsidian, the Shadowblade Arcade Stick is a worthy, if expensive, addition to the arsenal of any hardcore fighting-game fan. The cool-looking unit is forged out of solid aluminum, with a wide, flat base that fits nicely in your lap. There are also rubber pads on the bottom that cling well to tables and desks, for a more realistic arcade feel.

The joystick is well-designed and very responsive, although it may seem just a little too loose for some gamers. The stick also has an auto-fire button on top, and there are eight large action buttons arranged on the right. These buttons can be re-programmed any way you like, and even the button sensitivity can be adjusted. The user-friendly design also includes an integrated rubber pad beneath the buttons where you can rest your palm as you play.

The controller works perfectly with a variety of fighting games, as well as the occasional action or platform title. However, its versatility is clearly limited to these few genres. The only other downside is that the handling isn't quite as razor-sharp as you might expect from something named "Shadowblade," but it's still pretty competent.

All in all, when it comes to replicating the arcade experience on a home console, InterAct's product is a worthwhile contender for your disposable gaming dollars.

Retro Shock 2

Manufacturer: Pelican
MSRP: $24.95

Now that you're finally getting a PS2, are you having trouble justifying another $35 for that second Dual Shock2? Well, if you want to save yourself a couple of finskis, consider Pelican's Retro Shock 2. This solidly-built controller is a decent, less-expensive alternative that handles well with a wide selection of games.

Despite its dull matte finish, the Retro Shock 2 is comfortable to hold and even includes textured rubber grips over part of the handles. Although this is a thoughtful addition for intense gamers with perspiring palms, it would have been nice to cover more of the handles with the grips. But that's getting precariously close to nitpicking.

What's really important is how the controller performs, and in this respect the Retro Shock 2 acquits itself quite admirably. Both the floating D-pad and the analog thumbsticks are quick and responsive, as are the pressure-sensitive action buttons. However, while analog and digital modes are available, it also would have been nice to offer a "steering wheel" setting like some other controllers have. But that doesn't mean you can't still enjoy your favorite racing games — just that you'll have to do it in digital or analog modes.

Xploder

Manufacturer: Blaze
MSRP: $19.99

Blaze is gunning for the GameShark by offering its own cheat system called the Xploder, which comes preloaded with more than 2,500 cheat codes for over 300 different PlayStation games. All you have to do is insert the Xploder CD in your console, pick from a list of cheats you want to activate, and then switch to the game CD.

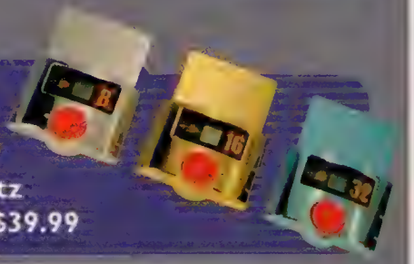
The Xploder features an easy-to-use interface that lets you see the actual codes without having to cruise through multiple menus — it's all available right from the main list. New codes are also available online at their web site, and you can even use GameShark codes! Plus, the software includes a CD music player that lets you listen to tracks from your favorite games.

However, the system is not flawless. For one thing, several of the games we tested it with didn't load after the cheat codes were selected, while other games worked perfectly. There seemed to be no rhyme or reason to this. Also, the list of preloaded codes could be more inclusive. For instance, it gives you Tomb Raider and Tomb Raider 2, but the third and fourth installments are absent. The same goes for Madden 99 and 2000, NASCAR 99 and 2000, and so on. How about issuing an updated version?

In addition, if you want to save new cheat codes you'll need a blank memory card, which isn't provided. So, if you don't happen to have a free memory card laying around, you're basically out of luck.

Considering all this, the Xploder does have its merits, but gamers will have to determine whether it offers enough benefits to merit a purchase.

High Capacity Memory Cards



Manufacturer: Mad Catz
MSRP: $19.99, $29.99, $39.99

We've all heard horror stories about gamers who have lost precious save data due to faulty mega-memory cards. Well, fear not, because Mad Catz has the perfect solution in its superb lineup of high-capacity memory cards for the PS one.

These handsome, metallic-looking cards are available in three storage sizes — Silver (8x), Gold (16x) and Platinum (32x) — and each comes with a handy plastic carrying case. A large red button lets you easily flip between pages of saved data, and an LCD display shows you the appropriate page number.

After months of rigorous use, we're happy to report absolutely no problems with any of the memory cards. No data has been lost in thousands of saves, and no disasters have occurred — which is pretty impressive when you consider how much information can be crammed into even the smallest of these cards.

In other words, we feel completely confident giving these memory cards our highest rating. Why spend $10-15 on a regular, 15-block memory card when one of these babies is all you'll ever need?

(If you have questions about the products tested, or your company would like to submit products for review, send an e-mail to ubergamer@aol.com)

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ECW

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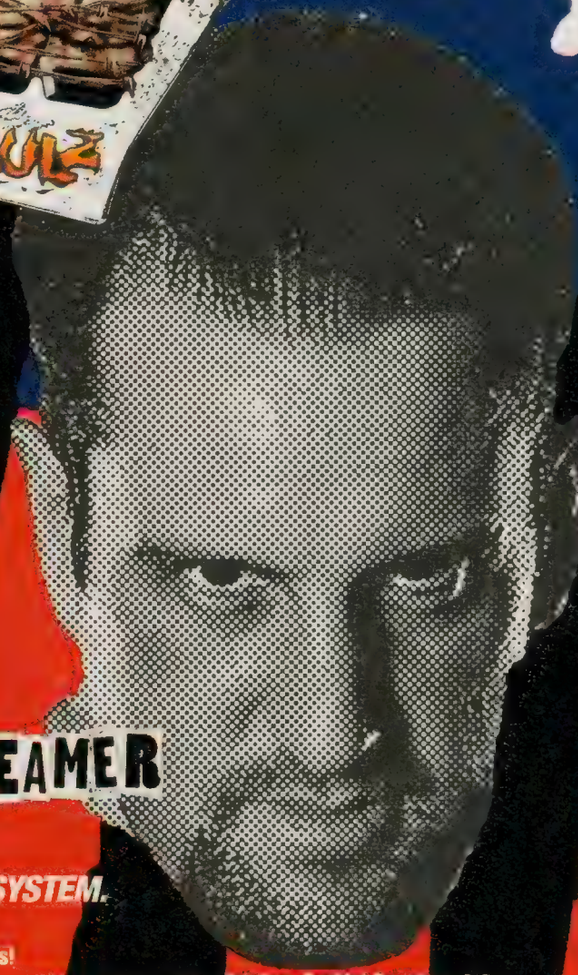
I AM AN ANARCHIST!

TOMmy DrEAMER



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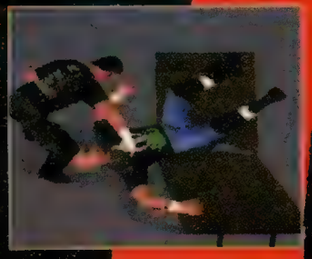

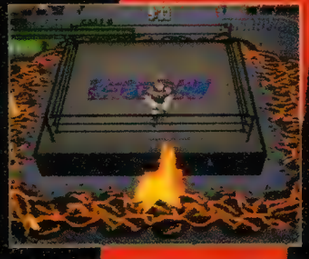

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PlayStation

Sega Dreamcast

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Animated Blood
Strong Language
Mature Sexual Themes

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TimeSplitters™

TimeSplitters is a really tough game to review. As a one player game, it is seriously lacking; they don't even bother to explain the title, let alone give you some sort of cinematic introduction to let you know why you should bother playing this game. But, as a two-to-four player game, it is a blast, with plenty of head-popping, cheat-infused fragging that rivals the most intense action to be found on the PC, albeit via split-screen and not on-line. Let's take a look at both sides of the coin.

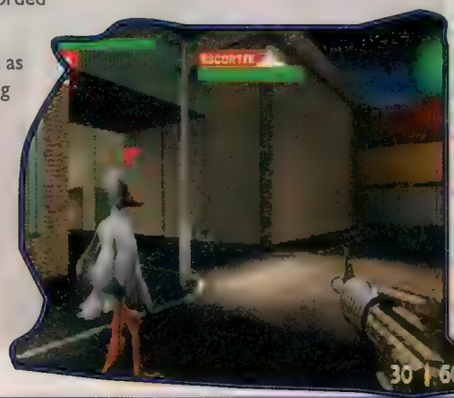
The one player game (Story Mode) finds you attempting to find a single object in each of nine different levels. Get the object and return to your base (a pink ring placed somewhere in the level) to beat the level in the quickest time possible. You start on the "Easy" difficulty setting with three levels open. Beat these and three more open. Beat all six and the last set of three will open. Beat all nine on Easy and you will open the game's Challenge Mode (more about that later). Each of the nine levels is themed to a particular period of time and style — from an Egyptian Tomb, circa 1935, to a futuristic space station, circa 2035. You will shoot enemies that are unique to each level, with a weapon set that will (usually) give you four or five weapons over the course of the level — some are duplicated from level to level, and some are unique to that period (past, present, future). Once you retrieve the required item, the "TimeSplitters" will make their presence known and this is where the trouble begins. The onslaught from these guys on the "Hard" difficult setting is unbelievable and will have you throwing your brand new Dual Shock2 in disgust.

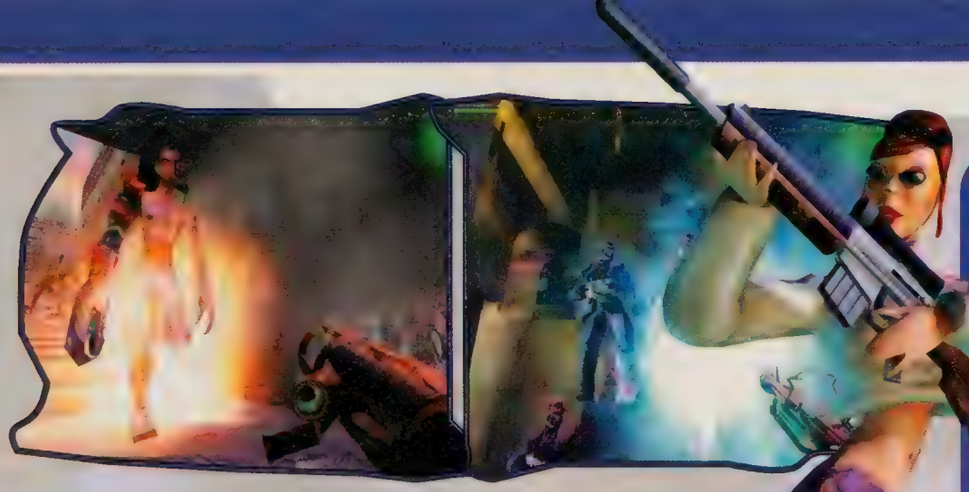
On Easy, the average player will make it through no problem. But, when you try Story Mode on "Normal" (essential if you want to open nine more new levels to play in Arcade Mode), things will start getting nasty. Simply put, TimeSplitters is one of the most difficult games you will ever play. Good players will be able to get through Normal (with the possible exception of the 1965 Mansion level (brutal)), but I know of no human that will be able to make it through the single player game on Hard.

There is a remedy for this, however, and it comes in the form of two-player cooperative play in Story Mode. With a second gun helping, it is possible to move through the rest of Story Mode — but you won't be able to do it by yourself.

OK, now for the good stuff. TimeSplitters' Arcade Mode uses the same nine levels that you played through in Story Mode, but with a number of classic FPS gameplay options thrown into the mix. And, if you beat all nine levels in Story Mode, on Normal, you will open an additional nine levels for use in Arcade Mode — bringing the total to 18 playable levels. Gameplay scenarios include: Deathmatch, BagTag, Capture the Bag, Escort, Knockout, and LastStand. I'm quite sure that Deathmatch requires no explanation, BagTag, Knockout and Capture the Bag are variations on basic Capture the Flag gameplay, Escort finds you attempting to protect a NPC against all baddies as he/she moves across a level, and LastStand will have you attempting to protect a base (almost in classic "Missile Command" style) against wave after wave (or "phase" as the game refers to it) of enemy attackers. Hold out as long as you can to secure the highest recorded point total.

The great thing about Arcade mode is that it is almost as fun against the computer as it is against live players sitting next to you. You will find that there are certain characters that seem to be killing you more than others and you will start to develop your own grudges. As you beat levels in Story mode, more and more of the enemy Bots and the Player Characters will become available to you. And, as you beat Challenges, you will open up Cheats that give you the ability to choose unique Bot sets like Elvis impersonators and Gingerbread Men, and to play a





game where you and your opponents do nothing but chuck bricks at each other!

Challenge Mode presents you with three specific scenarios to beat. As you accomplish these tasks, more will be given to you — 27 in all. While they are, for the most part, fun and challenging, there are a few of them (the Escort-style challenges in particular) that are impossibly difficult. This is problematic because it keeps you from getting all of the characters and cheats to be had in the game.

Graphically, the game is, for the most part, good looking. While the lighting effects are faked and the look and feel of the game is sort of a polished, high-tech "Doom", it is so damn fast (60 FPS — with some occasional slow down) that you will marvel at all of the action occurring on-screen and how smooth it all looks. The character models are OK — not quite up to the standards of a few other launch titles. Again, however, there are so many of them involved in the action that it is easy to forgive the lack of detail.

The level design ranges from very simple and linear to very complex (the "Castle" level — made available by beating the 1950 Village level in Story Mode (Normal) being my personal favorite). Some of the levels change structurally between difficulty levels in Story Mode, giving you a different twist as you make your way through the game.

Lastly, I want to talk a little bit about the control. When you first pick up the game, you will be frustrated with the default control scheme. Don't panic! Stick with it and, after about an hour, it will become second nature. The dual analog stick scheme really works well and is (for an FPS) the best substitute for keyboard/mouse that I have come across.

Oh, did I mention the "Mapmaker" function? That's right, TimeSplitters includes one of the most intuitive, easy-to-use level editors ever created. After a few minutes playing around with it, you will be building your own levels in not time — and you can store up to 100 of them on a single memory card. For those of you that can't wait to get building, see the sidebar in this feature for a quick tutorial.

Well, there you have it. In spite of the complete lack of any story telling and its failings as a one player affair, I really enjoyed the Arcade Mode in TimeSplitters and found the game to be very addictive — enough so where I wanted to keep working through the difficulty of the one player game. If you plan on having friends over to see and play your new PS2, you are going to want to have TimeSplitters in your software collection. If you only play by yourself, then you might want to give it a try before you buy.

Genre	FPS
Publisher	EIDOS
Developer	FREE RADICAL
Origin	UK
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Release Date	NOW!

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players

Multi Tap Adaptable 1-4 Players

SCORE: 92%

BOTTOM LINE

I am recommending TimeSplitters as a multiplayer game, and for its awesome Mapmaker. There is enough gameplay in the Arcade Mode and two player cooperative Story Mode to make it a good value, in addition to the Mapmaker, which can entertain you for a long time to come. TimeSplitters will offer you an incredibly difficult challenge in the one player game, and a tremendous amount of fun with your friends, or against the computer, in Arcade Mode.

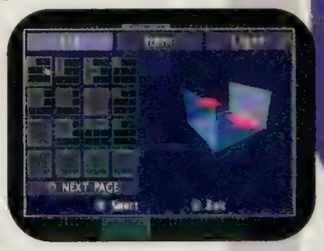
PSE2 EDITOR'S CHOICE GOLD

MAPMAKER

The Mapmaker gives the player the ability to create his/her own levels for 1-4 player play. Getting started in building your own game worlds can be a little tricky, so I've included this tutorial. By making use of this feature, you will be making your own levels in no time. Of course, we couldn't just TELL you how to do it, we had to go and do it ourselves! Simply follow the simple, step-by-step instructions and you will be playing our test level in nothing flat... Enjoy!

TILES

This is the area of the Mapmaker where you currently reside. You will notice that there are a number of building blocks (rooms and corridors) in the left-center of the screen. By hitting the X button, you can also access another page of rooms and corridors. By Grabbing a building block and dragging it to the Tiles map grid, you can place it and Rotate it, so that you may establish the floor plan for your level. By using the R1 and R2 buttons, you can zoom in and out of the map grid. The L1 and L2 buttons allow you to move up and down, between floors of a multi-story floor plan (seven floors maximum).



In order to get a test floor plan going, let's place a few building blocks so that they form (more or less) the pattern of a cross, with each end of the cross (North, West, South and East) opening into a large room.

LIGHTS

Before we can see what our level looks like, we need to turn on some lights. The Light menu offers a lot of flexibility. While you can only place as many light sources in each room/corridor as the program will allow, the Mapmaker allows you to choose the color and type of light in each room. By moving your hand tool off of a tile and on open grid area, pushing the X button will allow you access to the Light Menu.

In practice, you want to be conservative with your lighting designs. Don't make every room a different color/different effect. It is better that you choose a uniform lighting throughout most of the levels, and use effects and colors to highlight certain rooms. Remember: It won't seem dramatic if you use it all of the time— you will simply lessen the impact on the player. For our Cross plan, let's use uniform lighting (color: white, effect: Light On) for all four rooms, with blue/flickering lights in the corridors, and a red/pulsing light in the center room.

ITEMS

In the Item menu, we get down to the nitty-gritty. This is where you decide what kind of game you want to occur within the walls of your level. In Items, you will choose weapons, computer/human teams, item and weapon placement, start points, etc. Once you've established the parameters in this area of the Mapmaker, you will just about be ready to test your level.

MAP SETTINGS

By selecting this option, you are given two more options, "Tile Set" and "Music". Tile Set allows you to choose the graphic look and feel for your level, from among five different texture/tile sets: Gothic, Alien, Spaceport, Virtual and Industrial. The music option allows you to pick from among 23 different background selections. You can mix-and-match these soundtracks to create the desired mood for the tile set that you have chosen for your level. "Edit Map Description" allows you to describe and label your level.

TEST YOUR LEVEL

Save your work. By saving the level, it will now become available to you in Arcade mode. To play it, simply quit Mapmaker and go out to the Arcade mode menu. Under the Mapmaker heading, the available gameplay modes for that level will be there for you to select.

OK, let's get going. Load up the level and get in the game. If you are playing with less than four players, than each non-human team will be controlled by computer bots. You will immediately be presented with a game Options screen that is exactly the same as the one you get when playing any Arcade mode level in the game. How about we choose the "Period Horror" Bot Set and the default Weapon Set and have at it?

Wow! Pretty cool, huh? That's all there is to it! From here, you can go on and try to design all sorts of different types of levels and games. The tools are powerful and you will find that, after a couple of hours of working with the Mapmaker, that you will be creating levels that will present you and your friends with hours of fun.

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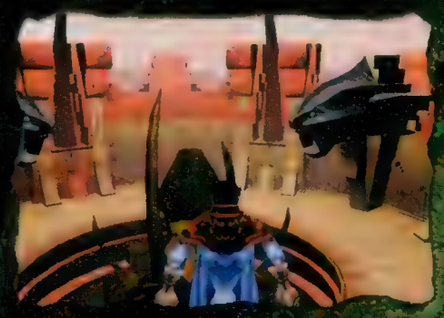
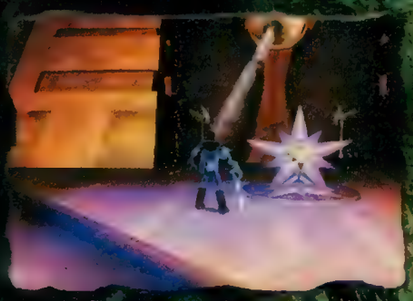
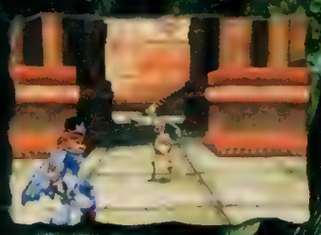
LEGACY OF KAIN

SOUL REAVER 2







Genre	Action/Adventure
Publisher	Eidos
Developer	Crystal Dynamics
Release Date	March, 01

In my opinion, Crystal Dynamics and Eidos made magic with last year's Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver. The story was well-written and well-conceived, the graphic engine really pushed the aging PlayStation's capabilities and the gameplay was second to none. While it wasn't perfect (many gamers complained about the endless running through empty halls and corridors, the incessant amount of block pulling/pushing, and the extremely short and disappointing ending), it still convincingly conveyed a creepy atmosphere, had plenty of soul-sucking/vampire-impaling gameplay, and offered up more than a few hours of shape-shifting puzzles. Like Onimusha: Warlords, the sequel was originally set out to be a PS one title, but shifted development over onto the PlayStation2 early on — which is just fine with me.

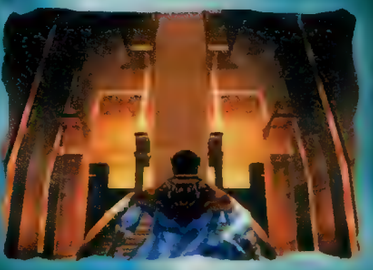
Eidos is being uncharacteristically tight-lipped about the sequel's storyline and how it fits into the Kain universe. What is known is that you once again take control of Raziel, a vampire who had the misfortune of evolving before his master, Kain, and that you will have to journey through three time periods within the LOK universe. Rumor has it that you will visit Nosgoth before its decline (when the vampires were flourishing), during the time when the original Blood Omen came to pass, and then the period between the first two Legacy titles — giving you a chance to save Nosgoth from the clutches of Kain.

While Soul Reaver 2 starts where the original left off (complete with the set of spells, weapons and abilities Raziel earned before the end of the game), Raziel will be presented with a new set of objectives, challenges and abilities. For example, the Reaver (the living sword attached to Raziel's arm) isn't just a tool for killing. By uncovering and dipping your Reaver into the many Reaver Pools in the game, you can gain access to a wealth of new powers, such as illumination, invisibility and the ability to grapple. With these new powers, you will be able to get to new areas and levels that are otherwise not accessible. There is said to be upwards of 40 skills you can gain with your Reaver, giving you the ability to constantly find new areas and re-explore ones you've already covered.

There are plenty more improvements, additions and features being implemented into the sequel, starting with the character models — Raziel is now comprised of upwards of 3,000 polygons compared to the few hundred of his PS counterpart — and ending with the amazing level of detail (which is four to five times higher than the amount from the original). Other new features include the introduction of reverse kinematics (Raziel's feet line up perfectly with stairs or uneven ground), a consistent 60 fps frame rate running in a resolution mode of 640 x 480, lip synching for all of the main characters during the in-game cut-scenes, the use of fog, mist and other weather effects to add atmosphere (not used to hide polygon pop-up), a variety of new and unique ways to kill enemies (including ripping them in half and then using their decapitated limbs as weapons), and the ability to pick up and carry more than just weapons (a new puzzle solving feature).

It's painfully obvious the internal team at Crystal Dynamics is passionate about the Legacy of Kain license, its universe, and the game itself. Given the amount of time and people they are dedicating to the project, Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver 2 is shaping up to be something very special.

GREG



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PlayStation 2

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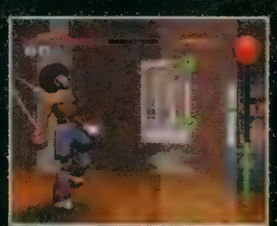

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鬼武者 Onimusha Warlords

Genre	Action/Adventure
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Capcom
Release Date	February, 01

A little known fact: Onimusha was originally in development as a PlayStation title, not PS2, and was almost finished when Capcom decided to port it onto Sony's next generation hardware. The reason for the decision is unknown, but it's most likely due to the fact that Capcom saw the opportunity to create a new franchise for the new hardware and make some dough in the process. If you're wondering (or worrying) how this translates in terms of the graphic engine and the overall quality of the game, fret not: this is Capcom we're talking about. It is evident they have gone to great lengths in order to make this a PlayStation2-specific title, and it shows. While the game's engine fits into the traditional Resident Evil mode — pre-rendered backgrounds with 3D polygonal characters — the amount of detail in both the characters and environments is astounding.

Written by Flagship — a subsidiary of Capcom who has been responsible for the storylines and scripts for the Resident Evil series since #2 — the story of Onimusha is set in the year 1560 in Feudal Japan. It is during this time the feared and powerful Warlord, Nobunaga Oda, begins his takeover to rule Japan. Nobunaga has just defeated Yoshimoto Imagawa, another famous warlord, in a surprise attack and now sets out to attack Yoshiatsu Saito's famous castle in the Mino Prefecture. During the confrontational chaos, a young princess, sister to the mighty Yoshiatsu, is kidnapped. Out of honor, a samurai warrior and remarkable swordsman by the name of Samanosuke boldly volunteers to rescue the princess. But these are the days of darkness and magic — Samanosuke does not realize that a legion of demon warriors stand between him and the princess. Based on both actual historical accounts and Capcom's own engrossing fictional storylines, Onimusha: Warlords promises to engross gamers with an adventure never before imagined.

There are a lot of notable features in Onimusha, but the most interesting revolve around the main character, Samanosuke. He (and most of the other characters and enemies in the game) is comprised of upwards of 10,000 polygons alone, delivering not only realistic animation, but the ability to convey facial emotions as well. There has been a special emphasis placed on this feature in the game, and this might be the first PS2 title to finally give credence to the Emotion Engine's title. Some of the other features include an amazing, motion picture quality, five minute intro (which won "Best of Show" at this year's SIGGRAPH 2000 festival), the use of famed Japanese actor Takeshi Kaneshiro (his face and voice are use for Samanosuke), a unique weapon system (where players obtain gems that they can equip to gain various effects — including fire, thunder and wind), a proprietary Background Animation Technology system which adds realistic special effects (players will see the wind rippling through tree branches and character's clothing, water lapping at the shore, and true-to life light-sourcing, adding shadows and eerie realism).

Like the RE series, Onimusha will offer up a unique mix of story, exploration, action and puzzle solving. The game promises to immerse and enthrall players into a fantastic medieval world and deliver a satisfying PS2 experience come early next year.

GREG

STREET FIGHTER EX3

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PlayStation 2

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Two years in the making, LucasArts is well under way to putting the finishing touches on their first PlayStation2 entry — Star Wars Starfighter. Looking back at their PlayStation titles, the fine folks at Lucas will be the first to admit their track record hasn't been all that stellar (most of their PS titles, especially the Star Wars franchised games, have been seriously lacking in the quality department. But with Starfighter, they are in essence wiping the slate clean. Having seen and played the game first-hand, I can confidently attest to this fact. Playing like a hybrid of Colony Wars and their N64 Rogue Squadron, Starfighter promises to combine spectacular space battles, tight and exciting gameplay, stunning 3D visuals, and a cinematic/cohesive storyline fitting into the Episode One timeline.

Starfighter places players in the roles of one of three mismatched starfighter pilots: Rhys Dallows (a cocky Naboo pilot-in-training), Vana Sage (a Naboo expatriate who roams the galaxy contracting her services as a gun for hire) and Nym (an alien pirate who lives a Robin Hood existence in the shadows of the Naboo system). These unlikely allies all have personal vendettas against the Trade Federation and must learn to work together to repel the invasion of the Naboo system. To succeed, each character is going to have to engage in intense battles and dogfights (on both ground and space) and use their cunning skills to outwit the enemy. The game's compelling storyline is entirely original, though it draws inspiration from key points within the Episode One plot. As the game progresses, players are presented with a series of challenges that will require the acquisition of new skills. Players who master starfighter combat will be rewarded with new story elements, characters and locations.

Starfighter promises to take advantage of the PS2's robust graphic capabilities. Its amazing engine (which is presented in high resolution) showcases more than 20 realistic and beautifully-rendered 3D starships amidst a variety of 14 different environments (which range from the grassy plains of Naboo to the climactic assault on the Droid Control Ship). To get an idea of how amazing the 3D engine is in the game, during a recent demonstration, the person playing took a starship straight up, miles into the sky. Instead of the ground below (and the characters doing battle on it) disappearing into the fog as he ascended, it was still in perspective, albeit very scaled out, and seamlessly scaled in without any redraw or clipping as he descended. Very impressive! My only complaint regarding the graphic engine is the framerate, which unfortunately is locked in at 30 frames-per-second instead of 60. Some of the other features in the game include a very cool zoom feature (which allows you to locate and target ships and enemies way out), and an amazing John Williams-inspired music soundtrack.

Look for Starfighter to ship sometime this December.

Genre Shooter
Publisher LucasArts
Developer LucasArts
Release Date December 00

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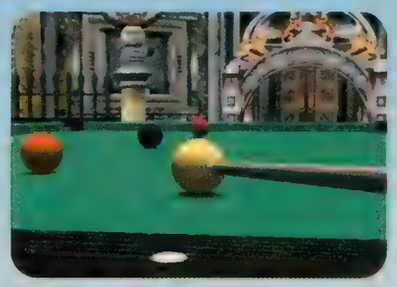

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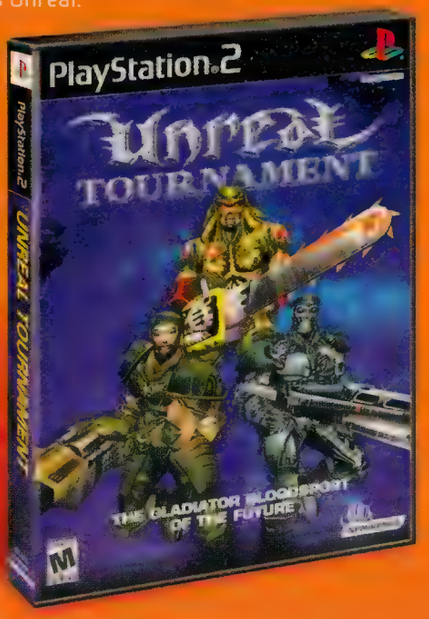

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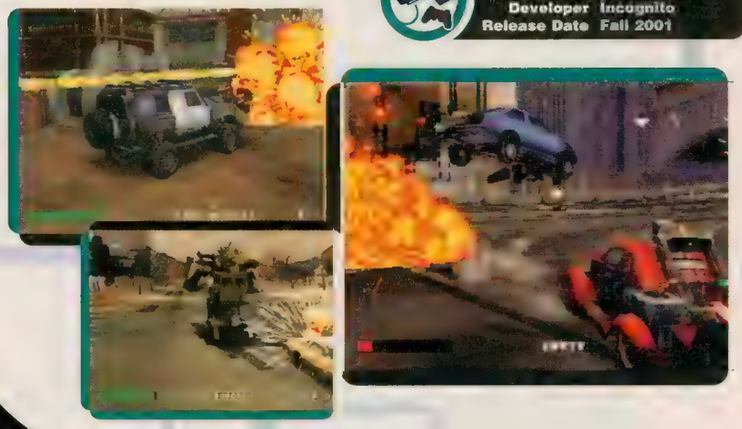
Twisted Metal Black

The eternally demented car combat series, Twisted Metal, is making its return on the PS2 next year. Completely designed and developed by the original Twisted Metal 1 and 2 team, Twisted Metal: Black promises to catapult players on a journey through a dark and evil world rife with horror and desolation. Capitalizing on the power of the PS2, TMB promises to deliver rich textures, superior graphics, super fast gameplay (60 fps) and outstanding special effects (including brilliant explosions and some very cool weather effects). The game's storyline has the infamous Calypso returning once more to host the ultimate contest of wreckage and devastation. The players this time — a motley crew of contestants straight from the local lunatic asylum. Here's a brief features list: Eight one-player battlegrounds, ten death-match battlegrounds, tons of weapons and combo attacks, enhanced player environments with moving traffic, changing weather, living pedestrians and interactive objects, a variety of game modes, four player split-screen and enhanced vehicle physics. Just wait until you see Sweet Tooth morph into a huge mecha robot!

Genre Car Combat
Publisher Sony
Developer Incognito
Release Date Fall 2001



Klonoa 2

At the recently held Fall Tokyo Game Show, Namco showed off its newest PS2 entry, Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil. A sequel to the series introduced on the PlayStation a few years back, Klonoa 2 keeps the same 2 1/2-D gameplay mechanics from the first while taking full advantage of the PS2's high-performance capabilities. The game will incorporate new playing features, effects and camera angles, but the playability and action of the original game will remain unaffected (making action/platform purists and fans of the original very happy). From the demo that was shown, it's clear that Namco is going for a visual feast for the eyes. The graphic engine in the game is very impressive, with a cinematic camera that changes position seamlessly and dramatically as Klonoa makes his way through each level. And, what seems to be very popular these days, everything in the game has a distinct, cartoon-style look, courtesy of cell-shading techniques seen in DC games like Jet Set Radio and Wacky Racers. Namco has not announced a US release as of yet. We're keeping our fingers crossed for mid next year.

Genre Action/Platform
Publisher Namco
Developer Namco
Release Date TBD

Sky Odyssey

Activision has acquired this gem from Sony Japan and is currently working hard in preparation for a "launch window" release. Sky Odyssey is a flight simulation that leans a bit toward the arcade side (similar in style and concept to Nintendo's Pilot Wings series). In the game, you will be given the opportunity to strap yourself into the cockpit of a variety of planes (from props to jets), then be sent out on a series of daring and dangerous missions across a variety of fictional islands. Each of these missions are objective-based, and range from re-fueling in mid-flight by landing on a moving train, to navigating over and across a huge mountain range during a full-fledged blizzard, to rescuing a hot air balloon by connecting ballasts to it before it crashes into a mountainside. In addition, Sky Odyssey offers a variety of game modes, including Training, Target (fly through rings in the sky for point values), Sky Canvas (learn to sky write) and Free Flight and some very cool features, such as varying weather effects, accurate flight physics and 60 fps gameplay.

Genre Flight Simulation
Publisher Activision
Developer SCEI
Release Date November

Top Gear Dare Devil

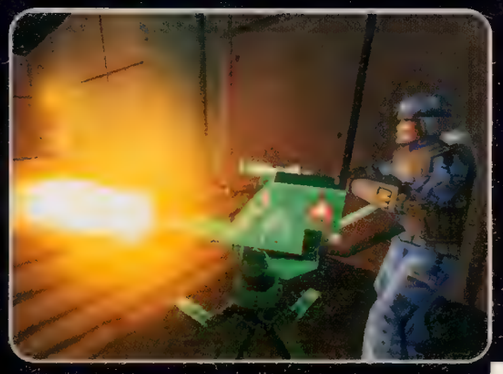
One of the more pleasant surprises to show up on our doorstep is Kemco/SVG's first PS2 offering: Top Gear Dare Devil. The newest addition to the long-running Top Gear series is a "go-anywhere" 3D driver that allows would-be dare devils and thrill seekers to run amok through four real-life metropolitan cities (Rome, London, Tokyo and San Francisco) in pursuit of glory, cash and chaos. The gist of the game is to head through each city, taking on a series of increasingly difficult time-based missions, where you must grab a certain amount of coins littered (and hidden) about and around the city streets, then hightail it back to the predetermined checkpoint. Of course, there's plenty of traffic, obstacles and pesky police to slow your progress. Some of TGDD's features include 27 levels set in four cities, a multitude of hidden cars to find and unlock, Obstacle and Time Trial courses, and a multi-player mode that allows for up to eight players to race it out simultaneously. As you can see, the game's graphic engine is quite amazing. Let's hope Kemco can maintain the quality with a consistent framerate and tight control.

Genre Driving
Publisher SVG
Developer Kemco
Release Date November

RED FACTION

In THQ/Volition's Red Faction, the player assumes the role of Parker, a worker toiling in mines run by the Ultor Corporation, far beneath the surface of Mars. The miners are suffering from inhuman living conditions and a strange, deadly disease called the Plague that is suddenly sweeping through their ranks. Your journey will take you from gritty subterranean mines to Ultor's pristine science and Nanotech labs, to the surface of Mars and even onto satellites orbiting high above the planet. Storyline aside, Red Faction introduces new technology termed "Geo-Mod", which allows for real-time, arbitrary geometry modification (which means, in essence, you can blow up and destroy just about any of the environmental objects in the game, including walls, ceilings, containers, vehicles, etc.). The cool thing about this is the objects contained in or behind the ones you blow up will spill, splash, erupt, leak, crumble and explode like they would in real life. This makes for some interesting game mechanics, such as the ability to shoot down ceilings on top of enemies. Look for THQ's FPS early next year.

Genre FPS
Publisher THQ
Developer Volition
Release Date March 2001



SUPER BUST A MOVE

Fans of Taito's long-running Bust a Move series (known as Puzzle Bobble in Japan) have another reason to rejoice this October, as their newest effort, Super Bust-a-Move, is making its way to the PlayStation2 at launch courtesy of Acclaim. Once again Bob and Bub make their return, only as secondary characters, making way for a whole new cast and crew of wacky bubble poppers. Being that the game is a straight-forward puzzler, there's not much room in the way of graphical improvements and, to this end, SBAM's look is pretty much the same as its PlayStation cousins (albeit displayed in higher resolution). Classic features return, including Training, Normal and Classic Modes, CPU Battle, where you select a character and battle against a host of CPU-controlled opponents, and Two-Player Battle. New features added to the game include conveyor belt walls that change the trajectory of your shots, tiny bubbles that you can sneak into small spots otherwise unreachable, bubble captives who are trapped in the puzzle and need your help to escape, and all-new PS2-specific characters.

Genre Puzzle
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Taito
Release Date October

WARRIORS OF MIGHT & MAGIC

Proving that they can do more than just Army Men sequels, 3DO is set to continue the Might and Magic lineage on the PlayStation2 this fall with Warriors of Might and Magic. As a departure from this long-running role playing series, Warriors will be much more action/adventure oriented, allowing newcomers and non-RPG players to experience the M&M universe. The storyline revolves around Alleron, a man falsely accused of witchcraft and banished to the underworld with a hideous living mask bound to his flesh. As Alleron, it will be up to you to discover who is behind your exile and, moreover, what sinister plot lays underneath. Warriors is played out from a 3rd-person perspective and has an emphasis on intense hand-to-hand combat. The game features 16 to 20 times the polygons used in the PS version, a host of special effects (including real-time shadows, dynamic lighting, anti-aliasing, mip-mapping, specular highlights and multiple particle systems) and plenty of exploration and puzzle-solving thrown in the mix.

Genre Action/Adventure
Publisher 3DO
Developer 3DO
Release Date November

SILENT HILL 2

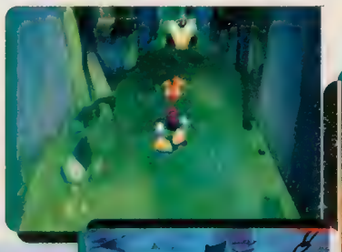
Konami recently revealed early details and screens of Silent Hill 2 for the PS2 at the Fall Tokyo Game Show. While information is hard to come by, we have been able to ascertain that the story and characters in the sequel are unrelated to the first, with only the setting being the common bond. The story begins when James Sanderland receives a letter from his wife who had passed away three years ago. The letter asks him to meet her at Silent Hill, the resort town he had promised to take her to. Upon arriving at the town, he meets a female character named Maria. Although Maria has a different hairstyle and mannerisms, she closely resembles his dead wife. Like the first game, the sequel is rife with grotesque creatures, creepy goings-on and a very evil and eerie atmoshpere. Silent Hill 2 will feature dark and claustrophobic environments, as well as the trademark mist and fog (except this time it is done for effect and not for hiding pop-up) presented in a very detailed, next generation 3D engine. Konami has not officially announced the game for a US release, but it's a no-brainer.

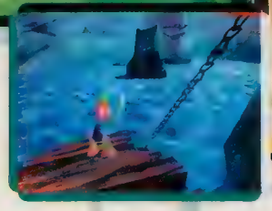
Genre Action/Adventure
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami
Release Date Winter 2001

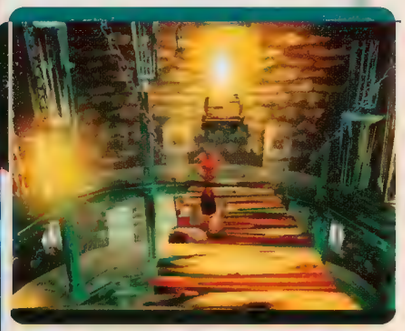
Rayman Revolution

While maybe not as popular as Mario, Sonic or Crash, anyone who knows videogames should recognize this limbless character. Around since the days of 16-bit, Rayman has successfully been traversing his way through colorful locales, using his wits, fists and own brand of magic to defeat any baddies who might threaten his peace-loving friends. Already released on PC, Dreamcast, N64 and PlayStation, Rayman 2 (re-titled Rayman Revolution), is making its way to the PS2 as early as November. The cool thing is, it's not a straight-up PC/DC port. The developers at Ubi Soft have gone back into the code and are in the process of adding, improving and generally enhancing the overall Rayman experience by taking advantage of the PS2's advanced hardware capabilities. While we only caught a quick glimpse of it at E3 this year, the game looked incredible, running at a constant 60 fps in the PS2's high-resolution mode. What we have been told is that the game will retain the amazing play mechanics found in the series while adding new features, such as new levels, new moves and plenty of PS2-specific special effects.

Genre	Action / Platform
Publisher	Ubi Soft
Developer	Ubi Soft
Release Date	November 00







Gran Turismo 3

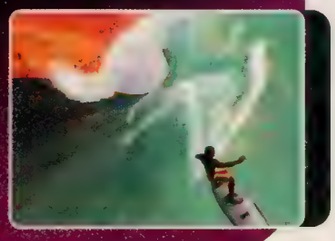
No, this isn't a new sequel to the still-not-released Gran Turismo 2000. It's just a new name for the game, which is not going to be shipping until March next year. A new demo was shown of Sony/Polyphony's renamed Gran Turismo 3 at a recent PlayStation2 press junket and it is looking very, very sweet. New effects in the demo included the ability to see into the cars (earlier car models had solid, light-reflecting windows), real-time relection mapping on the car bodies (versus generic reflections, such as tunnels, trees, etc.), and very cool atmospheric effects (fog, rain, heat waves, light, shadows, etc.). Also revealed, was the opponent AI, which will react independently to how you play the game. Instead of the typical "pack mentality" found in the earlier PS GT games, computer controlled cars in GT3 will develop their own individual strategies against you. If you brush against another car or force it into a wall, it might react aggressively against you, making for a much more challenging and exciting racing experience. Polyphony is still hard at work rendering out the 150+ car models for the game and looks to be on target for a March release.

Genre	Racing
Publisher	Sony
Developer	Polyphony
Release Date	March 01

Surfing H30

Released earlier this year in Japan under the name of "Surfroids", this surfing game is coming to the States, courtesy of Rockstar Games, revamped, reprogrammed and renamed as Surfing H30. As the first surfing game for the PS2 (of which there are three others currently in development), H30 tries to do things a little bit differently. Bundled in with the game will be a unique, patented X-Board controller (a mini surfboard-shaped piece of plastic that fits snuggly over and across the two Dual Shock's thumbsticks), which allows you to "finger surf" and perform over a dozen aerial tricks that can be linked for ultimate combinations. The game features six unique surfing environments and 11 different playable characters, which have specific characteristics, special attributes and abilities. Ultra realistic wave physics promise to recreate the feel of surfing on actual waves and the PS2's poly pushing power showcase spectacular and realistic graphics, as well as impressive lighting effects. New to the US version will be human characters, a two player mode, all new music, and a host of graphical improvements.

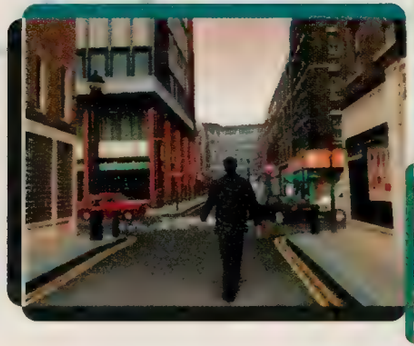
Genre	Surfing
Publisher	Rockstar
Developer	Opus
Release Date	December



The Getaway

Unfortunately, not much in known about this mysterious driving game out of Sony Europe, except that it features a very detailed 3D representation of London and, like Reflection's Driver 2, you can get out of your car and hoof it on foot. The storyline revolves around a reformed professional bank robber who is dragged back into the seedy underworld of vice and corruption when his son is kidnapped by a gangland boss. Developed by Studio Soho (the team responsible for the first two NBA Shootouts, Porsche Challenge, Turbo Prop Racing and Spice World), players will be able to explore the city on foot or steal a car and drive through just about any street in London as if you were really there. Over 50 cars will be available — all based on actual car models — and players will be able to perform astounding car-stunts, such as two-wheel races down back alleys, jumps and skids. Like Rockstar's Midnight Club, players will have the sensation they are interacting with a real, living city, with pedestrians and other drivers all getting on with their lives, as you try to save your own — even if it means stealing, reckless driving and widespread mayhem . Where do we sign up?

Genre	Driving
Publisher	Sony
Developer	Studio Soho
Release Date	TBD



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5 First Prize Winners will win 1 set of snowboard boots and bindings from Heelside.

15 Second Prize Winners will win a copy of MTV Sports: Pure Ride for the PlayStation game console.

Win a custom made snowboard from MLY

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HERE'S HOW TO ENTER:

Send a 4x6 postcard (no envelopes please) with your name, address, city, state, zip code and phone

Stamp

Mail To:

MTV Sports: Pure Ride
Sweepstakes
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Suite 270
Calabasas Hills, CA 91301

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PlayStation®

EVERYONE E

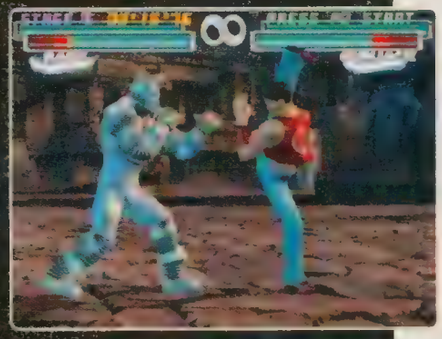
Tekken Tag Tournament

BY GREG OFF

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Genre	Fighting
Publisher	Namco
Developer	Namco
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

Namco and Sony have a long, storied history with each other. At the launch of the original PlayStation, Namco was there with Ridge Racer and, a few months later, the first Tekken. Both titles were well-received, with arcade-perfect graphics and spot-on gameplay. With each consecutive release of Tekken and Ridge Racer on the PlayStation, Namco has consistently been able to reach new visual levels and improve upon their award-winning gameplay. Fast-forward five years later to the present. The PlayStation2 has been available in Japan since March and Namco, once again, is right here alongside the hardware with next generation Ridge Racer and Tekken games. With both, Namco has been able to set new standards in terms of graphic quality and gameplay experience. Since we've already reviewed Ridge Racer V in last month's issue, let's take a look at what Tekken Tag Tournament has to offer.



As far as sequels go, TTT is more of an update than a full-fledged follow-up to the PlayStation's Tekken 3. The game has been in arcades for almost a year now and, while the PS2 version has been improved immensely from the coin-op, it's still a port and an extension of Tekken 3. Featuring almost the entire roster of characters from 2 and 3, TTT weighs in at over 30 fighters. Never content to have simply one game mode, TTT includes a host of them, including Arcade, 1-on-1, Tag, Survival, Versus, Team Battle and Time Attack. Additionally, there are some cool hidden modes, cinemas and characters to uncover and unlock, including a very fun and addicting playable mini game — Tekken Bowl.

Like DOA: Hardcore, Tekken Tag adds the new element of tagging in a second character. In the game, you'll get to choose two characters before entering a fight, and have the ability during the match to "tag" your partner in to continue attacking. The partner that is waiting in the background regains health energy. Gameplay is pretty standard Tekken fare — punches, kicks, multi-part holds, juggles and reversals — and many characters have additional moves added onto their arcade move lists. Some partners also have special tag-team moves, and can continue combos when an opponent is knocked into the air or on the ground. In addition, Tekken Tag also introduces other gameplay features not found in Tekkens of the past. The most notable is the ability to inflict higher damage when one of your fighters is in crisis mode. When this happens, your character's health meter will flash red, giving you a temporary strength boost.

Anti-aliasing — it's one of the most-talked about issues with the PlayStation2 since its launch. For those of you not familiar with the term, anti-aliasing smoothes out the jagged edges on graphic objects. When TTT launched in Japan, it did not have this feature in the game (it is not a built-in function of the PS2 hardware). While technically ignorant people (such as myself) didn't even notice or miss it, other, more "detail-oriented" folks freaked out over it. Like Tecmo with DOA, Namco took the time and effort to go back into the code for the US release and fix the problem in software. The end result is much smoother characters, that look more polished and realistic.

Speaking of graphics, the game is really a marvel to behold. Little touches like the way Lei Wu Long's handcuffs and hair move independent of his body, and women's dresses hang naturally and wave, rustle and move independent of their legs really show off the amount of care and detail (as well as the high poly counts) that the developers have put into the game. As far as the backgrounds go, they are also beautifully rendered. Some environments, like the back alley streets and the grassy fields are just incredible. Unfortunately, the developers chose to stay with the quirky scrolling line that separates the foreground from the background, diminishing the illusion that you are fighting in true 3D space.

As far as a first generation PS2 fighting game goes, you can't go wrong with Tekken Tag Tournament. The whole package, from the near-perfect fighting mechanics, to the excellent graphics, animations and music, and the variety of game modes, extras and endings, this game has it all. While it's not necessarily ground-breaking, it's exactly what I would expect from next-generation Tekken.

Bottom Line

If you're a fan of Tekken, the only thing that could possibly be better than this would be seeing Tekken 4. Fortunately, Namco knows how to deliver the arcade experience home, then take it up a few notches. I know there are going to be three choices when you saunter up to the shelves at your local software retailer on the 26th (SF EX3, DOA, TTT), but you can't go wrong by choosing this game, if you can only buy one.

Score: 98%

PS2

Compatibility

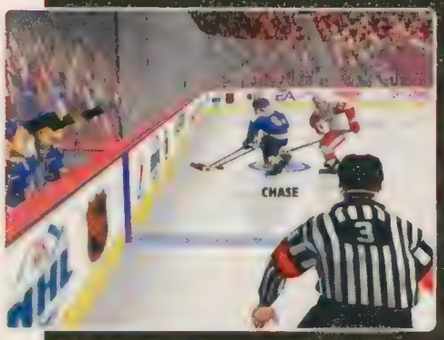
1 or 2 Players

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

NHL 2001

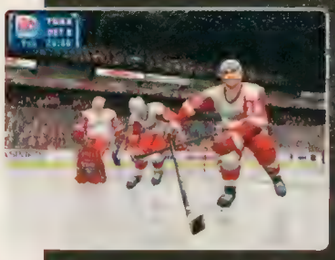
BY ERIC WINDING

Genre	Sports
Publisher	EA Sports
Developer	EA Canada
Origin	Canada
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!



Just when I was beginning to think that EA Sports had this whole PS2 thing down to a science, NHL 2001 arrives to shatter any notion that EA might have the golden touch (all of their PS2 titles have thus far received a minimum score of Gold). Unfortunately, hockey fans may have to wait another year or so before we find out if their sport can be developed to the heights of the football, soccer and snow boarding games.

Since I've left the door open for an explanation of the game's shortcomings, I might as well get to those before I describe the basic features and options! The main setback for NHL is the framerate and, specifically, the slowdown that occurs CONSISTENTLY throughout the game. Guys will be skatin' and bumpin' at a normal clip, and then the game will just sloooow for a few moments, until a couple of characters remove themselves from the scene of the accident. You say to yourself: "Self, okay, if too many guys get in one place at the same time, the game will simply crawl." It's not the first time this has ever happened in a game, although it's still not a good thing. However, what's even more disturbing is the fact that this will occur on the left side of the rink 100% of the time, not just occasionally, or when too many guys appear. Nope - it's 100%, 24/7, guaranteed, no doubt about it! It's a shame, and a crock of crud, too. Why did EA Sports release a game in this sorry condition, you ask? Who knows? The game was originally scheduled to ship 11-14, but it got bumped UP a full three weeks (to 10-23). Call me crazy, but if ever a game needed an extra three weeks of development time, it's this one!



Another area that could have used some fixing is that of shooting the puck. Most guys have seriously weak shots, and the puck flies through the air like a fly that is too fat and is easily swatted away with a quick backhand. The goalie reactions, therefore, are equally slow, and you get to see goalie slide form side to side, reach up, and grab the fly...er, puck...out of the air — all in about the length of time it took you to read this run-on sentence. Nothing "bang-bang" about it. You can wind-up for a big shot, but most of the time the puck will be stolen before you can get the bar even halfway up the power meter. Those are the most glaring gameplay issues in NHL 2001, and they combine to remove most of the enjoyment out of the product.

NHL 2001 does come packed with a goodly amount of features and options, however. In fact, some of you may find that you have TOO many choices! There are four skill levels, but there are dozens of gameplay options that can drastically change the way the game plays. For instance, you can set four different skating options (Game Speed, Speed Burst Length, Speed Burst %, Fatigue) on a scale from 1-8, and you can do the same with five different checking options. There's also a pass/shoot category, with another four areas to modify (although "shot speed" is not one of them). For my tastes, there's just too much that needs to be changed from the default settings in order to make the game more playable. Shoot, the default setting for Game Speed is so slow, I thought somebody slipped some downers into my Diet Coke. The new Momentum feature and Big Shots and Big Hitters icons are nice touches, as is the inclusion of classic ("historical") jersey selections. There's all of the other game modes (Shootout, Fantasy Draft, etc.) found in the PSX version, save for the Career Mode.

The graphics are top notch, and the cut scenes to players walking in from the dressing room and taking a seat in the penalty box are really eye-popping. The reflections in the ice are crisp and sharp, and the flexing of the plexi-glass on big hits is a nice touch.

BOTTOM LINE

NHL 2001 is a terrific looking title that simply misses the mark in terms of gameplay and framerate (the two being tightly linked together). It's funny that the import version of FIFA also had framerate problems, but EA fixed those for the US version. Too bad there wasn't an import version of NHL for them to fix!

SCORE: 73%

BRONZE

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players

Multi Tap Adaptable 1-8 Players

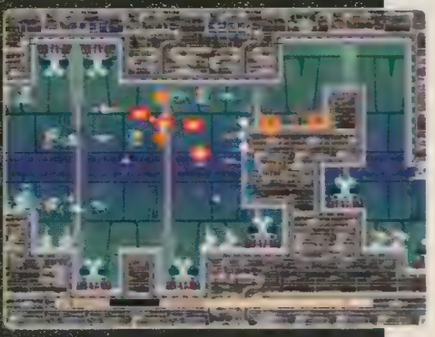
Gradius III & IV

BY GREG OFF

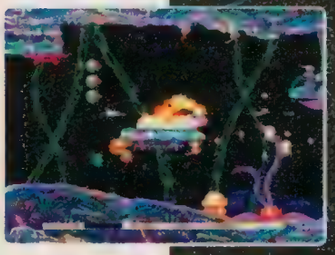
EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

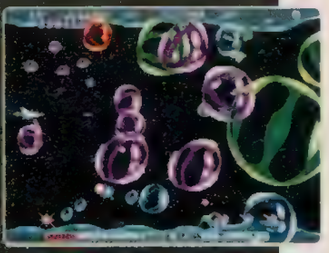
Genre	Shooter
Publisher	Konami
Developer	Konami
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

Any gamer worth their salt knows Gradius. This long-running shooting series famous for its Eater Island heads has been around since '86 (back in the day when shooters such as R-Type and Xevious were king) and has the distinction of being the first JAMMA (Japanese Arcade Machine Manufacturers Association) game ever created. Since its inception, Konami has made many sequels (well, four to be exact), spin-offs (Salamander/Lifeforce, Xexex) and parodies (Parodious, et al.) of this mega-popular Japanese shooter.

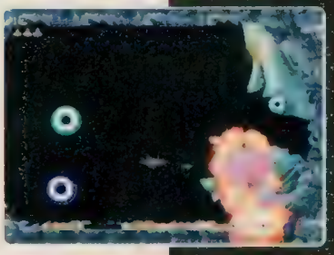


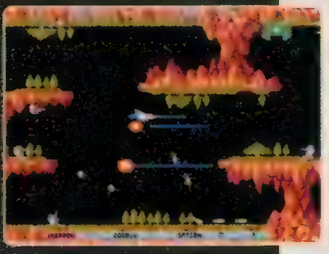
In the States, however, the shooter genre died a silent death sometime during the middle of the 16-bit era. Since then, US developers have been more than a bit gun shy about attempting to bring it back (some have tried with little success, such as Square with Einhander, Taito/Working Designs with Ray Crisis and Age Tec with R-Types) and have opted to stick with the tried and true genres, such as action/adventures, racing, fighting, etc., while leaving the shooter for our Japanese counterparts overseas.

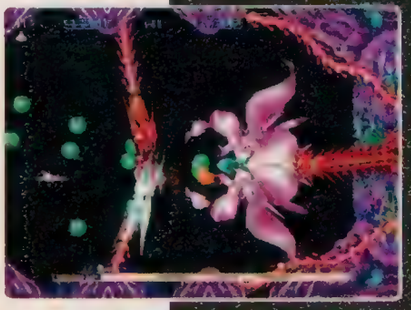




With Gradius III & IV for the PS2, Konami is attempting to bring back the genre with a compilation of their last two Gradius titles on one CD. Unfortunately, they are going to have a long road to hoe with these two, as I feel most of you lucky new PS2 owners will be expecting something next generational rather than being treated to two arcade-perfect versions of these classic games. While they are not necessarily bad games in any way, shape or form, they certainly aren't going to max out or show off your new, sexy black super system. However, in an effort to offer up gamers some extra added value, Konami has included some new play modes (including a variety of difficulty modes — from very easy to extremely difficult), the ability to save and load your games in progress, a level select (only for Gradius IV), which lets you choose any given level once you've opened it, a cool, DVD-style interactive menu system, and two amazing CG intros (which make me yearn for the day when games will really look like that).







If you're not familiar with the Gradius series, then let me take a few moments to fill you in on how it works. Sticking close to standard shooter formula, you basically pilot a 2D ship, horizontally from left to right, while attempting to shoot down wave after wave of baddies. At the end of each level you'll find a nasty boss waiting for you who, most likely, has a set pattern to his attacks you can learn and then master. Also, like most shooters, both games are definitely set on the high difficulty level and are a challenge for even the most seasoned gamers. What's inherently unique to the Gradius series is the power-up system, which lets you choose how you want to upgrade your ship by collecting various power-ups left behind by enemy ships. On the bottom of the screen is a series of options, ranging from speed-up and missiles to lasers and shield/force field. Every time you pick up a power-up, you cycle through one power-up option. At any time, you can choose the power-up you want to activate, letting you configure your ship the way you want. This brings some strategy to the mix, as you'll constantly be keeping an eye at your options, in order not to miss the one you want to choose.

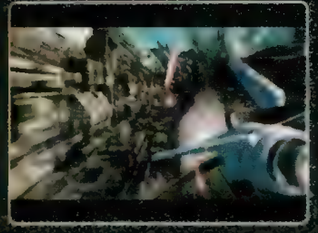
Gradius IV is definitely the better of the two games on the CD. Released in arcades back in '98, this game looks and plays very well — especially when compared to Gradius III, which debuted back in '89. Both games are exact coin-op translations and come complete with a set of PlayStation-specific options, such as Dual Shock vibration, analog support, and the ability to save and continue from where you just left off. Both games weigh on the very difficult side — even with the easier difficulty levels chosen — and only ninja gamers and die hard old schoolers will be finishing these off without the aid of a slow motion controller.

Bottom Line

Here's the scoop: If Konami had stepped up to the plate and offered up the ultimate and complete set of Gradius games and spin offs, then this would be a hearty recommendation. As it stands, if you're a fan of the genre or a fan of the series, then Gradius III & IV is more than worth a look-see. If, however, you're looking for that killer ap to show off your new hardware, and can only afford one or two games at the get-go, then you might want to pass altogether.

Score: 80%

SILVER



Compatibility: 1 or 2 Players

MIDNIGHT CLUB

BY DAVE WINDING

Genre	Racing
Publisher	Rockstar
Developer	Angel Studios
Origin	US
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

Rockstar and Angel Studios are just flying out of the gate on PS2. First we had Smuggler's Run, one of the best launch titles going, and now have Midnight Club, a racing games that eschews the wild, off-road experience for one of the wild, urban jungle type.

The essence of the game is checkpoint racing through fairly detailed and accurate representations of New York and, later in the game, London. Both cities include all of the landmarks you would think to look for, and a number of shortcuts, ramps' and jumps that are thoughtfully designed and that are critical to your success in some races. In addition, these cities feature pedestrians, tons of other vehicles, the police, working traffic lights, changes in weather and visibility, working signs on buildings and more. While there are times when the landscape will appear a little on the bland side, more often that not you will simply be stunned by the color and detail of the environments (particularly in New York). The vehicles are also well done, with models that feature interiors and drivers that actually move in the cockpit. There are three different views: two behind the car and one windshield view, and the game features a great Instant Replay system.

While Midnight Club offers a number of gameplay modes, including split-screen two-player racing, Waypoint, Capture the Flag and basic Joyriding, the heart of the game is its Career mode. In this scenario, you start as a lowly cabbie trying to work your way up in the secret and very illegal Midnight Club. You begin in New York and must race three different rivals and their clubs over different checkpoint-based courses. Each of the three (Emilio, Larry and Keiko) owns three different vehicles and when you race, you race for pink slips. After you've finished with these three, the city champ, Kareem will want to talk to you. Beat him, and it's off to London.

As the name would imply, all of the racing action occurs at night. After you beat Emilio and his gang the first time, you are given a cell phone. You can use this to dial up any of the club leaders for head-to-head challenges, or you can simply cruise the city to hook up with their gangs. It is this cruising for competition that is the only real weakness in the product. There are many times in the game where simply chasing down someone to challenge is much harder to do then beating them in the ensuing race! That being said, this oddity is the only blemish on an otherwise outstanding gameplay experience. Like Smuggler's Run (and Midtown Madness, another Angel Studios racer for PC), Midnight Club delivers a feeling of intensity and a speed rush that is very addictive. The computer AI is so well-tuned that you will find yourself alternating between feelings of absolute frustration and pure satisfaction as you try to map out the perfect route in a race, then try to execute it better than the other guys.

The game makes great use of the Dual Shock2 and the feel and sense of control while using the analog stick to pilot your car is tight and responsive — which is a good thing, since the game's physics model simulates the movement of all four wheels independently. Run over a curb at the wrong angle and your car will shift down and side-to-side, ever so slightly. Hit a street light at one side of center on the nose of your car, and it will be sent lurching toward the wall of a building.

Lastly, I was impressed with the depth of the game and the challenge that it offers. Career Mode will have you spending hour after hour playing, but the Waypoint and Capture the Flag modes are just as entertaining and multiplayer (up to four players — 2 human/2 computer) Capture the Flag is an absolute blast — particularly in the narrow streets of London with the pedestrian and vehicular traffic at its highest setting. Any way you look at this game, it is entertaining and exciting.

BOTTOM LINE

The PS2 certainly isn't lacking for quality racing titles in its first holiday season, and Midnight Club should rank near the top of your list. While it isn't quite the white-knuckle experience of Rockstar's own Smuggler's Run, it is very close. For those of you who prefer your driving in the city, you can't go wrong driving after "Midnight."

SCORE: 96%

PSE2 GOLD

COMPATIBILITY 1 or 2 Players

Orphen

By Dave Winding

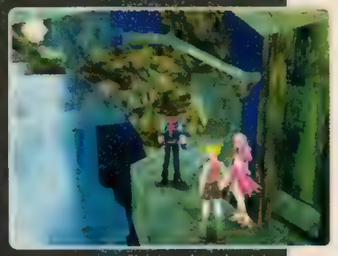
TEEN T — Content Rated by ESRB

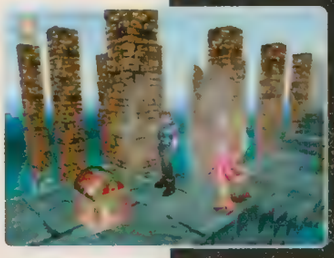
Genre	Action/RPG
Publisher	Activision
Developer	ESP
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

I, for one, would never have believed that we would be able to choose from FOUR different RPG's at the launch of PS2. Heck, with hardware allocation, that's a different RPG for each 125,000 owners of the system! Let's look at the list: Summoner, Evergrace, Eternal Ring, and Orphen. How does this one stack up to the others? Let's find out.

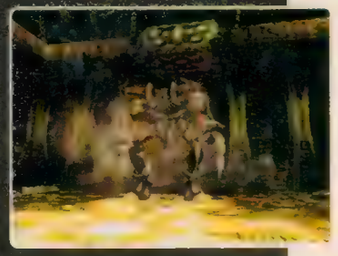
Orphen is a mixed bag. The story is pretty cool, the voice acting is horrible, to the point of being amusing — kind of like Priceline.com and William Shatner — the graphics are beautiful and the camera is terrible. Thrown into this jumble is the gameplay, which is pretty decent. Orphen treads a perilously thin line between an action RPG that MIGHT appeal to casual gamers, and an RPG geeb-fest the likes of which is seldom seen outside a 14 year old's suburban basement. Will it appeal to you? Read on, oh weary traveller...

The game finds you taking the role of Orphen, a head-strong, cocky sorcerer who seems to be more of the mercenary sort than an altruist. Orphen, his pupil Magnus, and his partner Cleo have boarded a ship that is destined for Arvinrama; they end up on Chaos Island. Coaxed aboard by Volcan and Dortin — a couple of characters that exist mostly for comic relief — Orphen, Magnus and Cleo meet up with a mysterious young woman named Zephy as the ship is attacked and they are forced to defend themselves.

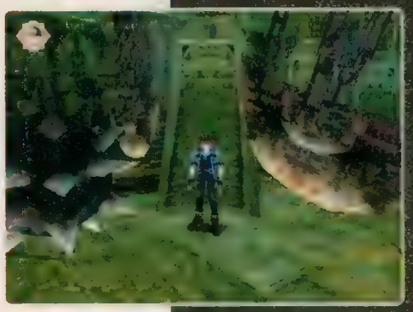




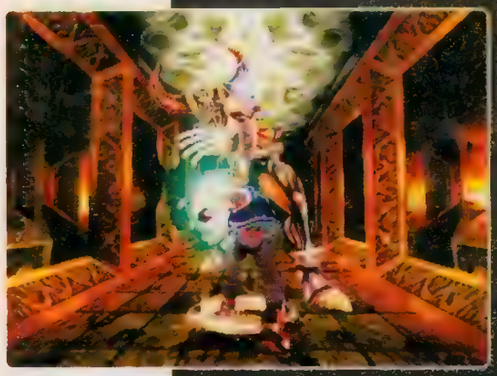
This is where you come in. You must first make it off of the ship, fighting a few bad guys along the way, then the big boss dragon in the sky. At the end of this first sequence, Cleo leaves the two of you with Zephy and your adventure on Chaos Island begins. Although you will occasionally take control of other characters in the game, you will mainly be in control of Orphen. In one of the funnier repeated sequences in the game, every time Orphen needs to fight, he will tell Magnus to stay and protect Zephy. Once the fighting is finished, the two of them will run up to Orphen and he will ask "what took you so long?" — EVERY time! It is intentionally cheap and less-intentionally funny.



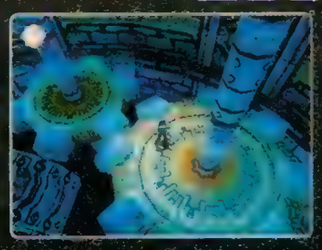
You have the full cadre of spells, attacks and defensive maneuvers at your disposal and learn more as the game evolves. In addition, Orphen wields the Sword of the Fallen Devil and can jump — giving the game more of an action-RPG flavor. For the most part, the gameplay is interesting. Although there certainly isn't any new ground broken, the quest is worthy of your time and the plot is intriguing. The environmental puzzles usually have to do with dodging something or using your blade to destroy it and the game engine cut scenes spell out what you need to do next in painful (to anyone but novice gamers) detail.



Graphically, most of the environments are built of fairly tight walkways — to the point where you feel that you are on a grid in space. Everything is colorful and attractive, but there aren't a whole lot of polygons being drawn. This becomes very apparent when manually manipulating the camera. By using the L1 and R1 buttons, you can rotate the camera around your active character. The problem is that the camera moves too fast and is always whipping around too far — and the auto-cam does not keep up with the action. The worst part of the camera system, however, is the horrible clipping that occurs. When you are working your way through a tight corridor, the camera blast through walls and destroys any illusion that you may have held of this being a real world. It is truly bush league and something you might have expected five years ago in a PS1 launch game. In keeping with the "some good, some bad" theme that I seem to have going here, the characters look pretty cool — almost like anime come to life, but their animation, particularly in the cut scenes, is not synched to their voices and you end up feeling like you are watching a foreign film without the subtitles. (Well, who am I kidding... it feels like you are watching an American broadcast of "Speed Racer.")



Then, as mentioned in the beginning of this article, there is the voice. It is almost as if they deliberately went for the Kimba/Speed Racer/Pokemon voices and stuck them in here. They know the average age of a first-generation PS2 owner is going to be over 25 years old — why irritate them with pre-teen, Sanrio-inspired Barbie dialogue and pitch? Of course, there are going to be those RPG geeks that will get all bent out of shape with my making these comments but, hey... if the Coke bottles fit...



Bottom Line

It probably sounds like I have more problems with than praise for Orphen. But, and this may just be my inner geeb trying to get out, I kind of liked the game. Yeah, it's got problems, but it kind of grows on you — like a barnacle on a ship.

Score: 84%

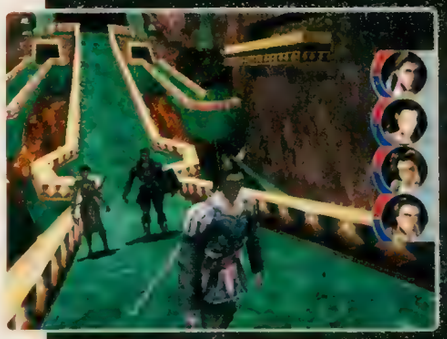
Silver

Compatibility — 1 Player

SUMMONER

BY ERIC WINDING

Genre	RPG
Publisher	THQ
Developer	Volition
Origin	US
Format	DVD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!



Summoner — the epic tale of prophecy and betrayal. The story of Joseph of Ciran, boy wonder turned boy blunder turned outcast and misfit. If you missed the cover story two issues ago, here's a recap: Summoner is an Action/RPG about a guy born with the mark of the Summoner on his hand — one who is capable of summoning hideous beasts in an attempt to save the world. As a young man, Joseph (hero in training) summoned a beast that wiped out his village (Ciran) and killed the majority of townspeople. Banished by those that remained, Joseph and his mentor, Yago, set off for the village of Masad, where Joseph would eventually throw his summoning ring down a well, hoping to leave his past behind him. All of this happens in the country of Medeva. Meanwhile, as the years pass, there is big trouble in little Orenia (the country to the north of Medeva). Emperor Murod has turned the country of Orenia into a prison state, where the opposition has been eliminated and the survivors are forced to work on the construction of a tower. The Tower of Eleh, as it's known, is a massive undertaking. Murod, not content to rule the world below, has his deranged sights set on conquering the heavens. He just has to get there first! Back home in Medeva, King Bellias II is having his own troubles with the war, trying to keep pace with Murod's armies. Apparently, Murod has sent out four "Ghost Riders" to search for the one with the mark on his hand, and they are wiping out every village and city in their quest. Trigger entrance to game...

So, the story is interesting - it's got that going for it! What it also has going for it is the fact that the story makes SENSE, and every text box and conversation makes sense. Why? The fact that the developer, Volition, is a company located in the USA probably has something to do with it. You see, Summoner wasn't developed in Japan, like 99.9% of the RPG's, so it doesn't suffer from the usual translation problems and cultural references that leave English speaking players scratching their heads ("You wanna do what with the pink dog and the orange cherry blossom?"). I can't say this enough — EVERYTHING makes sense! After all of these years, I finally comprehend the entire story of an RPG, although, as big as it is, it still took my pea-sized brain awhile to digest it all! BIG is another operative word for Summoner. The scale of the game is just large, as all the cities and villages are bigger than anything you've ever played before. Heck, just going from one side of town to the other seems like an adventure! There are shops and people to talk to all over town. In addition, there are dozens and dozens of "extra" people just milling about, along with dogs, cats, and horses. Some of the landmarks, like the Temple of Urath, the Tower of Eleh, and the Iona Monastery, are freakin' HUGE. Oh, and not to forget, probably the biggest architectural piece ever seen, the 16 (18?) platforms that butt up against the face of the mountain in Wolong, leading up to the Wolong Caverns — unbelievable!

There's a unique (sort of) fighting system in this real-time get up called Chain Attacks. Basically, you can chain together multiple hits to the enemy by pressing the D-pad in one of four directions when the chain symbol appears overhead. There's also a cool Skills Points distribution system. Each time you level up, you get two-to-three Skills Points that can be spread out to any of the attributes you have available. This allows you to customize each of the four characters to your liking.

If you like sub-quests, you'll love Summoner. There are over forty of them, and the majority of them are multi-tiered — you just can't do one task and finish the mission. Oh, no, in Summoner, you've got to do, on average, about FIVE different tasks before each mini-quest is completed. This, obviously, adds many, many hours to the experience. Speaking of time, it's hard to say how many hours it would REALLY take to complete the game, because the clock stops ticking everytime you search the inventory or stop to talk to somebody. The clock told me 28 hours, but I'd bet it was almost double that!

The graphics for Summoner border on the spectacular, although the special effects are not what you would hope for (coming from the almighty next generation machine). The F/X in Dragoon were every bit as good, for the most part. There are plenty of voice-over cut scenes and rendered story boards, but nothing that screams "Wow, how'd they do that?". The attention to detail, however, that can be found in the city streets and in the depths of the caves and caverns, is what really polishes off the look of the game.

BOTTOM LINE

Summoner is a visual treat, and the story is mature and cohesive. The game combines the elements of action and RPG better than most, and it never fails to surprise. There are a few moments of difficulty unbalance toward the end, but the overall package is very well executed.

SCORE: 94%

PSE2 Editor's Choice Gold

COMPATIBILITY 1 Player

MOTO GP

BY DAVE WINDING

EVERYONE
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Genre	Racing
Publisher	Namco
Developer	Namco
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

It's funny. After nearly eight years of working in this industry, you hear all kinds of clichÉs bandied about. You know, the accepted terms that are part of the language of the business that no one really questions. One of these is ""sim" — but what does the word mean? Of course, it means "simulation" and, within the context of video gaming, is referring to games that have you behind the wheel of a car, in the cockpit of a jet, etc. In addition, it has come to reference games that are not arcade-style. In other words, driving games where you actually have to use the BRAKE!

Namco's Moto GP falls into this category. It stands out from the other notable PS2 racers this holiday season (Smuggler's Run, Midnight Club, Ridge Racer V) in that it makes you use the brakes as much as the gas and technique is everything. Of course, it is still a video game so it belies the term "sim" and the degree to which you might like the game is going to depend largely on your personal tastes. If you like going gonads-out speed, all the time, this ain't the experience for you. That said, I prefer racing games that make your head snap back, and I really like Moto GP - let's take a look.

Moto GP offers a few different modes of play: Arcade, Season, Time Trial and Versus (2 player/split-screen) and it keeps track of your racing history and offers you a Challenge diary that keeps track of performance goals that you have reached and rewards that you have earned (additional riders, bikes and tracks), and an Instant Replay feature that will help you re-live your best performances.

Did I mention that this is a MOTORCYCLE game? That's right, Moto GP has you racing over a number of familiar circuits (Suzuka, Paul Ricard, Jerez, Donington and Motegi for starters) in a field of 21 racers with one knee to the ground. The graphic engine, which looks quite a bit like the one found in RR5, is almost photo-real (when viewing races in Instant Replay mode, there are times when you swear it is) and incredibly fast. Like RR5, there isn't a whole lot of life to the surroundings, but the environments are highly detailed and polished to perfection. As is the animation and detail on the bikers, which you have to see in motion to really appreciate. Details like riders turning around to get a glimpse of a fast-approaching opponent and catching the reflection off of their helmet's face mask, or explosive crash animations add to the believability of the product. And, although you will spend half of your time riding the brake, the frame rate is always above 30 fps and, when you do hit the gas, you really feel the difference.

There is no question that you will be riding the brake, even on "Easy" (there are three levels of difficulty: Easy, Normal and Hard) and with non-sim handling (Novice and Expert being the two options). But, it's the way you use the brake that is cool. You must constantly tap the brake and gas buttons back and forth to accelerate out of turns. This is the key to victory as the game has been tuned so that you are only going to be able to make up so much ground on the straights. The game rewards you for being as aggressive as possible going into a turn, braking hard and using the chicane, grass, and other bikes to help slow you down, then using the brake-gas-brake-gas strategy to pull back out into the next straight. It takes a few races to get the technique down, but once you do, you will love the sense of competition against the computer opponents. Of course, should you tire of the one player games, the 2 player, split-screen game is just as fast and even more intense when you can actually lean into your opponent — separated only by a bowl of popcorn.

The real beauty of Moto GP is that it just keeps getting better the more you play it. Once you get the hang of the control and technique, you will find yourself trying to achieve every Reward in the game by meeting every Challenge.

BOTTOM LINE

I know that I've already recommended three racing games for purchase on PS2, and this is the fourth. But, can you blame me? Moto GP is a completely different type of experience and won't appeal to all racing game fans. But, I'm the type of player that would normally back away from this type of game — and I love it!

SCORE: 93%

PSE2 GOLD

COMPATIBILITY 1 or 2 Players

EVERYONE
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

FIFA 2001

BY ERIC WINDING

Genre	Sports
Publisher	EA Sports
Developer	EA Sports
Origin	US
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

I had the pleasure of playing the Import version of FIFA soccer for the PS2 many months ago. There have been many graphic and gameplay improvements for the American release, and they all add up to make this version of FIFA one of the best soccer games ever made, if not THE best.

EA Sports has been producing "football" games under the FIFA banner for nearly a decade, and it has become synonymous with the best playing soccer games available. The American version features the Major League Soccer License and all of the players and teams from the MLS. It also includes 16 other leagues from around the globe — Italy, England, Spain, Germany, and an International league to name a few.

The gameplay in this PS2 version of FIFA is remarkably similar to the PSX versions. The players can make a number of different special moves, different types of passes, and they can also pack a certain amount of punch to their shots, thanks to a power meter that comes up when you hold down the shoot button. Depending on when you release the button, you will have a more/less powerful shot. Sounds reasonable. As mentioned above, you have a few different passing options at your disposal, including a lob, a touch, and a through pass (by using the L1 button). For your assistance in completing a pass, each player has a "passing indicator" underneath their feet as they dribble the ball. As you move the player, arrows will point in the direction of a teammate (one arrow at a time). The arrow will be either green, yellow, or red. Much like the traffic markers, these universal color symbols have been chosen to represent good, so-so, and bad, respectively, in terms of the probability of your pass making it to the intended target. For instance, as you dribble down the left side, the arrow underneath you points to the middle, at about 2:00, letting you know that a dude wearing your same color shirt is nearby. However, the arrow is red, so now isn't the time to pass to him. The color of the indicator may change, however, the longer you continue to dribble without losing control of the ball (as your teammates work to get open).

The passing indicator helps in most cases, due to the fact that the camera angle is generally too tight to see the other players not in your immediate vicinity. You may not see the guy that is open, as he will be just off screen, but the indicators will let you know that he's there (and that he is open!). Speaking of camera angles, there are four different perspectives, but they either get you too close or too far away from the action. And, even the ones that work (up close) will eventually fail as you get from one side of the pitch to the other. For instance, you may have the ball at midfield, working your way through the defense into the clearing for a shot, but when it's time to shoot, you won't be able to see the goal and will find yourself taking a lot of blind shots. One last note on the camera angles — you can modify the height and closeness of any of the four preset cameras, but, unfortunately, it doesn't alleviate the problems.

Graphically, FIFA MLS is head and shoulders above anything previously found on the PSX. The player detail (right down to the "EA" on the shoes) is magnificent, and the lighting F/X really add a sense of reality to the proceedings. The animations, however, are what really make FIFA a blast to play, as all of the little subtleties in the game are easy to see on just about every play. The special moves (L2, R1, & R2) all perform flawlessly, and the end result is usually breath-taking. Bicycle kicks, headers, slide tackles, and diving saves all come to life in brilliant detail. Seeing IS believing!

BOTTOM LINE

FIFA 2001 MLS is a terrific playing game of the "World's Pastime", but fans of the series won't find any new gameplay revelations from the old PSX versions. That said, it's still a blast to play, and plays good enough that even casual fans of soccer (or sports) will want to grab a copy of this game!

SCORE: 96%

PSE2 GOLD

COMPATIBILITY

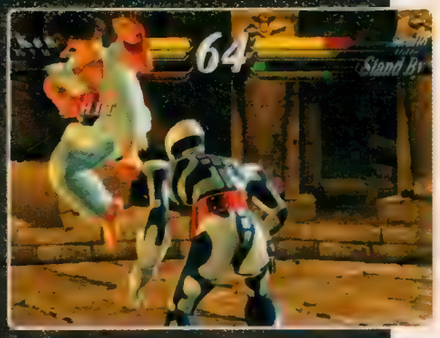
Street Fighter EX3

BY GREG OFF

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Genre	Fighting
Publisher	Capcom
Developer	Arika
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

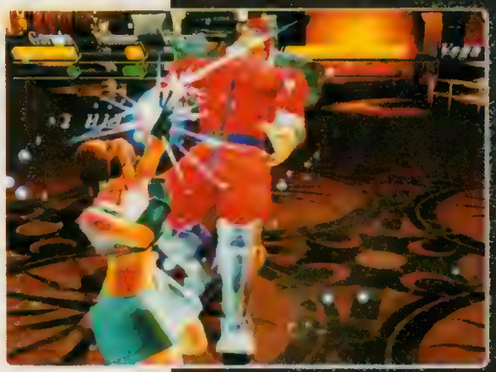
As one of the first games out of the gate for the Japanese PS2 launch, it's likely that Capcom's Street Fighter EX3 was a rushed product. This is definitely evident in the fact that there wasn't much in the way of game play improvements over it's PlayStation predecessor (Street Fighter EX2 Plus), and that it also had some frame rate issues (the game seriously slowed down when a lot of action was taking place on the screen). Like Namco with Tekken Tag Tournament and Tecmo with DOA Hardcore, Capcom took the seven months between the Japanese and US launch to tweak and make some improvements to the game. While they didn't go the extra mile and get rid of any anti-aliasing issues, they have at least gone back in and fixed the slowdown.



My main issue with Street Fighter EX3 is that it really doesn't offer anything new or "next generation" in its package. This is not to say that it's not a good game as far as Street Fighters go. It still manages to carry on the SF lineage quite well, bringing together such old-school favorites as Ryu and Ken, Blanka, Dhalsim, Chun Li, Sagat, and M. Bison, as well as some of the newer characters that have been introduced in a variety of other Street Fighter titles in the past, including the other 3D EX games as well as the 2D series. It just doesn't have enough to make it stand out over the other fighters hitting the store shelves on the same day.

Developed by Arika (the makers of all the PS EX games), SF EX3 does manage to add some new twists and modes to the genre. Continuing the latest trend of adding a tag-team element, it's now possible to switch between pre-selected characters in specified matches. If you are low on health or taking a particularly bad beating, you can call on your buddy to come in and clean up. SF EX3's main mode us its Original mode, where you pick from the typical roster of fighters and jump right in to a surprisingly short, six stage cycle. In this mode, each match (which is the standard two of three) is a bit different than the last, comprising of three-on-one, two-per-team tag battles, one-on-one, and team battles. Each time you defeat an opponent or opponents, you are given the option of recruiting them to join you in your quest. Up to three partners can be recruited throughout the game and you can select from your roster who you want to join you before each bout. The other fighting modes in the game include Tag Battles, Team Battles, Dramatic Battles, Four Player matches and, probably the most interesting of all, the Character Edit mode. An extension of sorts to the Expert mode which appeared in the first two PS EX titles, the Character Edit mode sets you up with a generic-looking fighter named Ace, who starts out with no special moves or abilities. As you complete a set of specified tasks, you'll be given experience points with which you can trade in for special moves, supers, combos, etc. You can then use your beefed-up fighter in any of the game's other modes.

Besides eliminating the slowdown found in the import version, Capcom has also added a few new features. These include the ability to access an on-screen move list by simply hitting the pause button (saving you the hassle of paging through the manual or exiting out to the Training mode), and a random character select option. While these are all welcome additions, they really don't do much to improve the overall package-- with the exception of fixing the slowdown.



As far as graphics go, SF EX3 doesn't exactly raise the bar, but it does manage to look clean and sharp. The backgrounds seem to be a mixture of 2D/3D hybrids and the characters themselves look a bit blocky and, to be quite honest, a little goofy. Some of the special effects in the later levels are especially impressive but, overall, the game still feels like a rushed product.

Bottom Line

As with all Street Fighter titles, Street Fighter EX3 plays best as a multi-player game. While it doesn't necessarily lack in any one area, it just doesn't scream "next generation", especially when compared to the competition which is also available on day one. If you can only afford to buy one or two, my recommendation would be to rent it first, and then make your decision.

SCORE: 79%

BRONZE

COMPATIBILITY 1 or 2 Players

EVERYONE
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

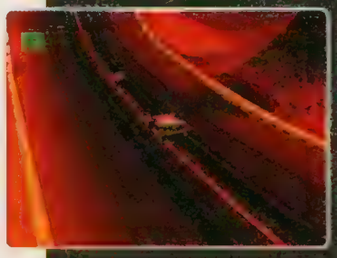
WILD WILD RACING

BY ERIC WINDING

Genre	Racing
Publisher	Interplay
Developer	Rage
Origin	UK
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	November

Interplay, a company that has gone through some tough times over the past three years, is looking to rebound with the introduction of all-new titles for the all-new systems in the all-new century. Among their first few titles for the PS2 is an addictive and simple racing game called Wild Wild Racing (WWR).

While the name may be lacking in originality, the game delivers something that never goes out of style, and something that is not subject to the whims of temporary fancy — GAMEPLAY! And good old fashioned gameplay at that, found in a relatively subdued racing environment. WWR offers up four gameplay modes: Quick Race, Championship, Time Attack, and Challenge. Most of these modes require no clarification — even to the most casual of racing fans. The Challenge mode, however, does need to be explained. It is here that you can unlock secret cars for use in the other game modes. You can also win engine upgrades and open up the next level of Challenges. The Challenge mode is broken down in three categories — Skill (engine), Stunt (next level), and Quest (car). In the Stunt mode, you are required to get to a checkpoint in a certain amount of time. The course section is "extreme", meaning it is not a typical section from one of the standard race tracks, but rather is designed specifically for the task at hand. The Skill mode involves pushing a ball across a finish line in a set amount of time. For example, in the first level Skill mode, the task is as simple as bumping the ball 3-4 times, and maintaining a straight line over a few hills in the process. If you get too much air and go sideways, you won't be in position to bump the ball again, and you won't have enough time to regroup and get the ball to the finish line. In Quest Mode, you race around a track, trying to collect the letters hidden about that spell the name of the car to be won — should you collect all the letters and get to the finish line in the time required. The Challenge mode adds a ton of replay value to the overall package, and could be a stand alone game all by itself!



Of course, you don't want to miss out on any of the Time Attack races, either, because you can earn additional upgraded car parts in the five levels here, as well. You can pick from the different skill levels (Beginner, Amateur, Pro), different tracks (Mexico, Iceland, India, USA, Australia), and different sections (Uphill, Downhill, Flat). Once you've beat all three sections of one course on one skill level, you'll be rewarded with an upgrade for a certain car. There are three cars to choose from at the beginning of the game, and then another six that are unlocked during the progression of the game.

The Championship mode is simple enough — earn the most points and at the end of the season, you'll be the victor and will be allowed to move on to the next level. What makes the setup really cohesive is the fact that the upgrades for the cars are won in the other game modes. So, if you want to compete at the higher levels, you're going to need to spend some time playing the Time Attack and Challenge modes.

The attention to detail in the car models is really well done, as you can see virtually every nut and bolt on your buggy-like vehicle. The particle F/X are also nicely done, with the appropriate amount of mud and dirt being kicked up as the tires race through the courses. Unfortunately, that's about the end of the positive statements concerning the graphics. The tracks, although well designed, are rather bland to look at, with only a minimal amount of detail to be found. There's no pop-up or fog, but then again, there's nothing to be drawn in! A few trees here and there, an occasional parked car, and that's about the extent of the detail. Happily, the framerate is smooth and the controls are workable (could be a bit tighter).

BOTTOM LINE

Wild Wild Racing is the kind of game that you'll look back on in a few years and say, "That was a fun game. I wonder why they never did a sequel." The answer will probably be that the original got lost in the shuffle of the other good racing titles that came out during the same time and didn't ended up selling well. Of course, I'll still buy a copy, and if you like gameplay over graphics, you might want to get a copy, too.

SCORE: 87%

SILVER

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players

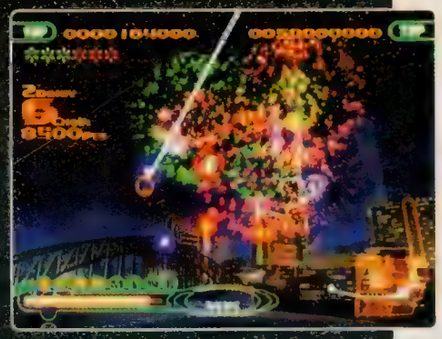
FANTAVISION

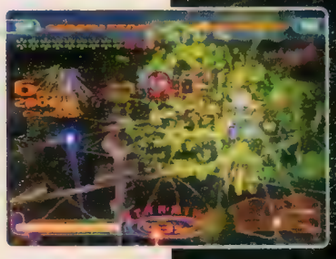
BY GREG OFF

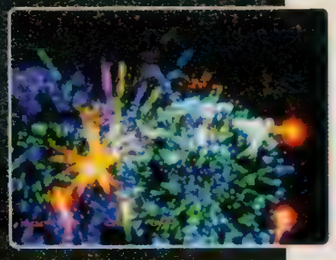
EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

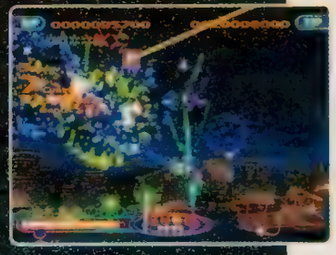
Genre	Puzzle
Publisher	Sony
Developer	Sony
Origin	Japan
Format	DVD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

Before reviewing Fantavision, Sony's one and only PS2 launch effort, I decided to take a few minutes and go back to the import review I wrote way back in the May issue of PSExtreme (volume 5, issue 6). In that issue I had given the game a Bronze score of 75%, concluding that it lacked any real substance and was more of an interactive screen saver than an actual game experience. Would the US version, complete with a new two-player mode and English explanations of the funky fireworks-bursting gameplay, light up the night sky, or would it still fizzle out like a dud on the fourth of July? Read on to find out.

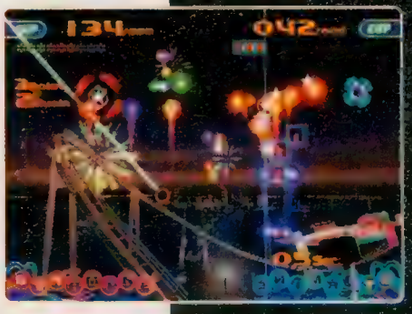








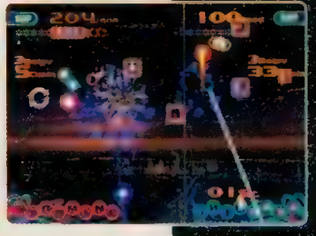
While this puzzle game looks and plays very simplistic by nature, it is actually quite complicated to explain. The whole idea behind the game play is to catch and ignite the fireworks being shot into the atmosphere before they fizzle out and fall to the earth. This is done with a "Cursor", which can be positioned anywhere around the screen by using its accompanying "Guideline" (a straight line which you aim with the left analog thumbstick). Basically, you aim your guideline toward a group of "Flares" (fireworks that have yet to explode) and hit the X button to "catch" one or more before they fizzle out and disappear. If you can catch three or more of the same color with your cursor quick enough, you can then detonate or "Flash" them by pressing the circle button, and watch as they burst into a colorful array of pyrotechnics. There is an energy meter located at the bottom of the screen, and every time you successfully explode your flares it fills up just a bit. Conversely, if you miss an opportunity, and your flares fizzle before you can detonate them, your meter will deplete. When the meter reaches empty, it's "Game Over." Here's where the strategy comes in: Detonating colored flares will then detonate others of the same color caught in their blast, and different types of fireworks explode in different ways (some burst in circles, for example, while others will explode downward). The total number of flares you can explode simultaneously is called a "Chain" and, with a little diligence, you can chain upwards of 40 at once, as the difficulty level increases. As you are busy detonating and chaining your fireworks, the game's camera pans and shifts slowly through the sky/atmosphere on a set path. There is an on-screen map which shows your location in the level at the bottom of the screen. In order to complete a level, you have to successfully make it to the end without your energy meter depleting all the way to empty. This is the basic gist of Fantavision, although there are other strategies, techniques and elements involved, including bonus rounds, special items, various flares, and learning to "Release" and "Dribble" (the act of prolonging your flare from fizzling out by catching it and then releasing it).

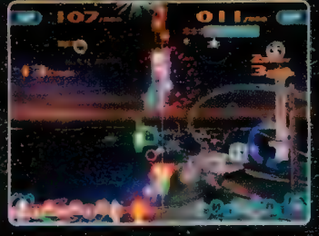


Okay, sounds complicated enough, but it's really quite easy and a bit challenging once you have the hang of it. The game comes with an interactive Tutorial Mode, which explains most of the strategies as well as the basic gameplay elements. I definitely suggest that you take the time to go through it before playing, as it really helps.

New to the US version is a two-player versus mode, that adds quite a bit of replayability to the game. The basic objective for the two player game is to be the first to flash 600 flares. There are a few new elements to this mode, including an item that widens your playing field and narrows your opponent's, and one that reverses unflashed fireworks and playing fields, thus stealing your opponent's flares or giving him yours.

One of Fantavision's strong points is its presentation and graphics, which are drop-dead gorgeous. The colors and pyrotechnics are brilliant and the 3D interactive backgrounds, which range from nighttime cityscapes to celestial otherworlds, are just as amazing. You can also save your replays after each level and then tweak them by changing camera angles and adding effects, such as rain, snow, and motion blur. The music is also very kooky-cool, which fits the whole slick package. Rounding things out, in between levels you are treated with a FMV of a retro space-age family sitting around the TV looking like something off of an Atari 2600 packaging.





BOTTOM LINE

So, the question is, now that I've played the US version and have been able to learn all of the strategies and nuances of the game, do I like Fantavision better? The answer — yes! While it's not nearly as fun, addicting, or challenging as say Tetris or Super Bust a Move (also a launch title), there is gameplay to be had here, and it is fun for a limited amount of time. While I wouldn't make it my first choice if I was only going to be buying one or two titles at launch, I wouldn't completely dismiss the game either.

SCORE: 83%

SILVER

COMPATIBILITY 1 or 2 Players

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Real Pool

BY ERIC WINDING

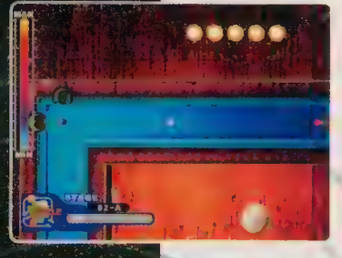
Why me? Those are the words that kept going through my head each time I "booted" up Real Pool from Infogrames. Where's Androvich? I thought Mark was the pool guy around here! All I can say is, he better be here for the next one (coming next month, as a matter of fact, from our friends at Rockstar). Anywho, Real Pool is here, but don't fret! It's not "real" and it won't make you give up your Saturday nights down at the local billiards hall.

Genre	Sports
Publisher	Infogrames
Developer	Takara
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

Real Pool, developed in Japan by Takara (it's "big" in Japan, but then again, isn't everything?), has four distinct game modes: Carom, Pocket, Tournament, and Puzzle. Carom is about as boring a game as I can imagine (actually, all SIX of the Carom varieties are boring). If you've never played this type of pool, it plays like this — there are no pockets in the table, and you score points by hitting the two (or one) red balls with your cue ball. Edge of your seat excitement, this Carom-style pool. Next up is the standard "Pocket" type of gameplay; 8-Ball, Rotation, 9-Ball, etc. Can't forget "Bowliards," though, as this game "combines the action of billiards and bowling," and is one option you can't stop playing (insert laugh track here). The Tournament Mode is where you take on different "personalities' at a variety of different pool games. For instance, the first guy up is David, and he'll challenge you to a game of 9-Ball, his specialty. If you beat him, you can move up to "Anne." Of course, if you can't beat David, then you probably shouldn't be playing video games of any kind. The characters are cardboard cut-out anime style types, and have an annoying habit of being displayed before and after every shot. I guess the power of the PS2 isn't such that it can actually handle one on-screen polygonal pool hustler. Instead, Takara seems happy to flash the same flat 2D art that we've seen on screen since the 8-bit days. Then again, there's very little (nothing?) that would lead you to believe that this game is any better than anything you played on the PSX. The aforementioned puzzle mode is kind of interesting, if you're looking for a pool game/ miniature golf hybrid. The puzzles all have different-shaped pool tables, number of balls, and number of attempts allowed. For example, the table could be shaped like a "T", with three balls in various spots, and you would have four attempts at pocketing the three balls. Different, sure, but not much more fun than plain ol' pool.

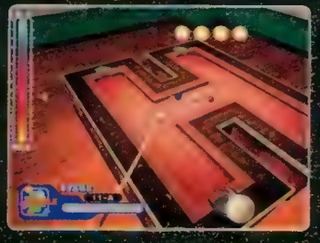
Graphically, Real Pool could easily be confused with any other pool game on any other system. I mean, what's exactly cutting edge about this? There's a big rectangular shaped table with green felt and six holes sitting on a tile laden floor. Ooh, ahh! The balls look like Charlie Brown's head — round and shiny. That's it! It's as sterile of an environment as there could possibly be. No chairs, no people, no pictures on the wall, no nothin'! For that matter, the tiles on the floor get blurry up close, like an N64 game! Maybe Real Pool is a port of an old N64 game that never made it to the states? Maybe Androvich could look into that for us. Maybe we don't really want to know...

Lest you think all of the programming went into the sound instead of the graphics, I'm hear ("hear," get it??) to tell you that it ain't so. No, the music sounds more like the stuff being played as you search the aisles looking for Hungry Man dinners. I believe it's called "Muzak", and boy, is there lots of it! In fact, there's an option that lets you go to the "Jukebox" and select your favorite musical selections! That's thinking ahead — give 'em so many great tunes that they'll want to go in and listen to them when they're not actually playing the game.



Lastly, just so that I leave you on a positive note, there is one good thing about the game. When you pause the game and hit "Quit Game", it doesn't ask you if you REALLY want to quit the game. It knows you do!

BOTTOM LINE



In all good conscience, I can't give this game 1%, because it's not the most horrible game of pool I've ever played. However, there's certainly no reason for this to be published for the PS2. If you've got any other pool game for any other system, then you can skip this title.

SCORE: 70%

BRONZE

COMPATIBILITY 1or2 Players

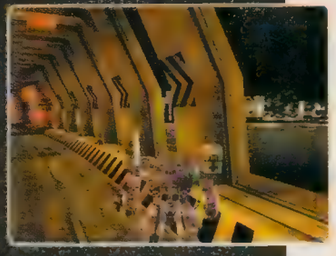
Armored Core 2

BY DAVE WINDING

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Genre	Mech Shooter
Publisher	Agetec
Developer	From Software
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

I've got to admit it. I don't get Armored Core 2. It seems like everyone in the video game press has been going ga-ga for this game since it was first announced. Of course, it hasn't sold squat in Japan, and the previous games on other platforms (including PS1) didn't do much. With pre-teen boys across America currently graduating from Dragon Ball Z and Pokemon to another unexplainable Japanese passion, Gundam/Mech stuff, Armored Core 2 could be the one to possibly cross the line and become a hit — should any 11 year old boys manage to get hold of a PS2 this holiday season.



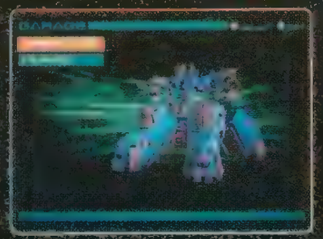
The game is very much on the plodding, simulation side of the big-metal-things-fighting-each-other genre. The control scheme is not at all intuitive and you find yourself repeating a basic procedure in almost every mission; shoot, slowly strafe while being pummeled by the bad guys, fly away to escape out of desperation, then watch your mech become engulfed in fire as you die. You have a gun and a long-range missile attack in your repertoire at the beginning of the game, in addition to a close-up attack and the ability to jump and fly for short distances. You can strafe from side to side and look up and down, but the game makes use of the digital pad for mech movement and the R2 and L2 buttons to look up and down. It takes awhile to come to grips with the control scheme and I can safely say that, after 10 hours of gameplay, I am still not comfortable with it. Of course, there are also issues like the fact that you can't move while being shot. I have actually been in mid-air in a mission and had enemies shooting me to the point where I was completely frozen — in mid-air!?! I actually let go of my controller and watched while the enemy aircraft kept my mech suspended on the strength of their gravity-defying bullets!

The game's structure allows you to earn money for successfully completing Missions, which you can then spend on repairing and upgrading your mech through an obscene number of different parts and taking on combatants that challenge you in the game's Arena environments. The initial Missions are easy enough to deal with, but things quickly become more difficult. The problem with the speed and control of the game becomes more apparent as more and more flying enemies attack. It is very frustrating and no amount of letters from Gundam freaks will change my mind.

Graphically, the game is a mixed bag. There is no problem with the frame rate, but the speed of the gameplay is never an issue as you are piloting a mech and it is very slow. The environments are high resolution and fairly low polygon count — with decent textures. Like Gun Griffon Blaze, there just isn't a whole lot going on graphically, so it is hard to say that the game represents state-of-the-art — it's just another PS2 launch title. The most attractive part of the package are the glue and stat screens that hold the entire package together.

Then, there are the voices — possibly some of the worst voice acting of all time. It's not that Agetec didn't attempt to do a nice translation and give the game some sense of a plot, but it's that the actors are SO bad. The accents are laughable and why they even have to attempt them is lost on me. The music and effects are nice, as they are in most games that bear the From Software label.

While there may be a few hardcore players who find that there is something here to love, I am not one of them. There comes a point where the game simply has to be fun to play — and Armored Core 2 is not. When I play a game, I want to feel like I'm in command and that there is some sort of method to the madness. Armored Core 2 offers neither.



Bottom Line

Armored Core 2 is an action game that fails in its execution and is weighed-down by its simulation trappings. Average graphics, poor control and gameplay, and laughable voice acting come together to take down a project that the people at From obviously cared about, but simply could not deliver.

Score: 73%

Bronze

Compatibility 1 or 2 Players

GUN GRIFFON BLAZE

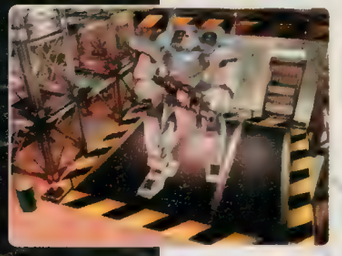
BY GREG OFF

Genre	Mech Shooter
Publisher	Working Designs
Developer	Game Arts
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

Amongst the 25 or so PlayStation2 titles available at launch, there will be three fighting games, three driving games, a couple of puzzlers, some action/adventures, a few shooters, and even a strategy game or two. Not to be left out of the mix, there will also be two Mech games hitting store shelves: one from Agetec — Armored Core 2 (see Dave's review elsewhere in this issue), and one from Working Designs — Gun Griffon Blaze. While both of these games feature giant mechanized robots loaded to the gills with a huge arsenal of deadly and destructive weaponry, they are actually quite varied and different. Armored Core 2 definitely leans more to the simulation-side of gameplay, with a lot of thought required into upgrading and improving your mech as you progress through the game. On the other side of the coin, WD's Gun Griffon Blaze is way more arcade-like, and is all about dropping into the heat of battle and shooting and blowing things up — it's as simple and complicated as that. Oh, there are a set of mission objectives that you have to complete in order to progress through the game's many levels, but they are mostly of the "locate the building and blow it up," or "destroy all of the enemies before the timer runs out" variety.

Graphically, Gun Griffon has many high points and just a few lows. The bad news is the environments themselves are somewhat barren and underwhelming. While they are quite large (although you will hit that annoying "invisible wall" if you stray too far from the heat of battle), there is not much in the way of detail or variety. Many of the levels feature large grassy plains with a few trees and mountains here and there thrown in for good measure. The good news is that, because of this, the action rarely (if ever) dips below 60 frames per second. In addition, the the mechs, buildings, explosions and other environmental objects are extremely detailed and very well done, almost making up for the sterile environments. Another cool graphical touch is your mech's zoom feature, which allows you to magnify and zoom into the screen like a sniper rifle. This adds a dramatic visual effect to the game as well as a new element of strategy — you can't move when zoomed in, but you have a better chance of targeting and hitting enemies far away.

The way Gun Griffon works is this: Before each level you are given a brief set of mission objectives to complete. To ready your mech for the mission, you are then given a choice of equipping optional weapons and parts from an inventory, which you can add to by collecting pick-ups and items left behind from fallen enemies and buildings during gameplay. Once your mech is fully loaded, you then are dropped into battle. There are a variety of different weapons to use against the enemy, each with their own attributes that work in the right situations. Enemies will typically leave behind some form of pick up, which include the aforementioned equipable options and weapons, as well as ammo, medals and repair kits. The faster and cleaner you beat the level, and the more medals and pick-ups you collect, the better grade and ranking you'll receive upon completion. Whereas Dave complained about the control scheme in Agetec's Armored Core 2, controlling your mech in Gun Griffon Blaze is a breeze. The left analog thumbstick is used to turn left and right and look up and down, the right analog thumbstick is used to strafe left and right and move forward and back, the L1 button is used to jump and temporarily hover, the R1 button is used to fire, the R2 button is used to cycle through your weapons, and the triangle button is used to zoom.



If you couldn't tell, I really enjoyed Gun Griffon Blaze. It's fun and easy to play, yet very challenging in the later levels. The battles are intense, the graphics are more than adequate, and the game controls well. While it might not have long-term replayability (due to a lack of a multi-player option), it's a fun and entertaining experience arcade-style experience that comes recommended.

BOTTOM LINE

For what it is, Working Designs' Gun Griffon Blaze provides a great arcade-style shooter, complete with many bells and whistles. While it might not be as deep and involving as Agetec's Armored Core 2, (and that's not necessarily a bad thing), there is plenty to like about this game. If you're a mech fan, or are looking for some intense shooting action, then don't think twice about picking this game up.

SCORE: 93%

PSE2 GOLD

COMPATIBILITY 1 Player

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WILD WOLF

AS AN APPETIZER...OR ENTREE?

WILD WILD RACING

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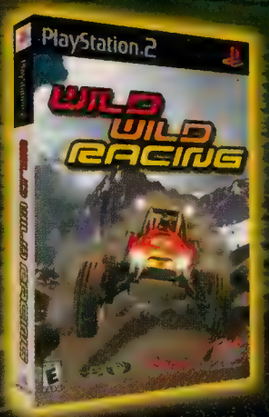
IGN.com

"...Wild Wild Racing [is] the surprise gem of Sony's now-crowded launch lineup."

Gamefan.com

"Wild Wild Racing is one of the few games that showcases what the PS2 can do."

Silicon Magazine



Available at launch

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PlayStation.2

Not to mention a couple hundred software titles! In the future, we hope to cover everything we need to. Due to practicality, we are therefore making a change to our PS reviews. Most titles will now be given summary reviews, with a few of the more impressive games being allotted a full page. This should point out that this is still more coverage than our competition! As always, you'll find out everything you need to know to decide which games would make a worthy purchase.

Crash Bash

Genre Arcade | Publisher SCEA | Developer Universal/Eurocom
Origin UK | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available November

The latest Crash Bandicoot installment (developed by Eurocom, not Naughty Dog) is a multiplayer "party" game. Unfortunately, I don't think it's possible to replicate Mario Party's success. First of all, Nintendo's characters are much more popular, and second, the PlayStation is already blessed with many excellent multiplayer games such as Pong, Poy Poy, Worms, and You Don't Know Jack.

Crash Bash skips the board game theme altogether and simply presents 22 different games you can jump straight into. Although that sounds like a lot, they are all variations on seven basic themes such as knocking opponents off a platform or coloring squares with a pogo stick.

Although the Crash characters are superfluous, the underlying game is actually a polished multiplayer contest. I can't recommend it for the solo player, however, since the one-player mode can be completed in less than a day. And if you already own one of the party games mentioned above, you might want to rent Crash Bash first. However, if you've got a multi-tap and have been looking for a simple yet addictive experience to share with friends and family, this could be it.

SCORE 92 GOLD

Looney Tunes Racing

Genre Racing | Publisher Infogrames | Developer Circus Freaks
Origin UK | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

This is the best cart racing game to come along since Crash Team Racing. Unlike some recent contenders, LTR doesn't use the engine of a 3D exploration game and thus the camera is more stable. While there is some slight slowdown when the action heats up, the game otherwise moves at a brisk pace.

Although vehicles can powerslide, the vast majority of the races can be won by simply putting the pedal to the metal. Strategy only comes into play when using weapons. Coins can be collected to "purchase" progressively stronger attacks, which means that you've got to decide whether or not to use the weapon at hand or save up for something better. Adding to the mayhem are turbo pads and Acme gates, which create obstacles on the track ahead.

Fans will recognize the courses which are inspired by classic cartoons. The soundtrack consists mostly of familiar classical music, and the character quips are also immediately recognizable (even if they aren't voiced by Mel Blanc). If you are a Looney Tunes aficionado, the game is a must. Even if you aren't, you'll find LTR to be a fun, fast-paced, well-balanced cart racing game.

SCORE 96 GOLD

Medal of Honor Underground

Genre FPS | Publisher EA | Developer Dreamworks
Origin USA | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

Medal of Honor Underground is another great shooter that will please veterans of the original, as well as new recruits. However, while the developers have found ways to improve the gameplay and heighten the realism, the sequel suffers from a surprising lack of refinement that detracts from the overall experience.

The gameplay has been intensified through improved enemy A.I. Foes will dodge your fire, run for cover, shoot at you from balconies, behind hedges and around corners, or suddenly leap out of windows and over walls. You'll also have to take on enemy tanks and other vehicles, which provides some of the game's greatest moments.

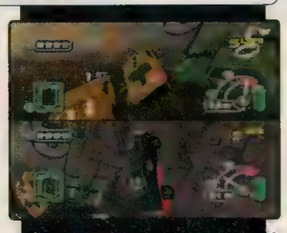
Unfortunately, these improvements are somewhat dulled because the framerate slows during heavy firefights, and the controls don't seem quite as refined as the first game. Manon sometimes moves like she's walking through cement, and you'll also get "snagged" on objects around you due to the iffy collision-detection.

So, the game isn't perfect, but it's still a riveting experience that shouldn't be missed.

SCORE 95 GOLD

Destruction Derby Raw

Genre Racing | Publisher Midway | Developer Studio 33/Psygnosis
Origin UK | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!



After releasing Destruction Derby 2 in 1996, Psygnosis took a hiatus from the series, leaving Infogrames to fill the gap with last year's Demolition Racer. Now Psygnosis has "one-upped" the competition with Destruction Derby Raw.

There's much less pop-up and draw-in than in DD2, and Raw also features three times as many tracks as the prior two games. Whereas DR was limited to two players, and DD2 only one, DD Raw supports the multi-tap, allowing up to four players to compete. You can also choose from 19 different vehicles, and unlike in DR, your opponents will not all be racing the same type of cars.

Everything you'd expect from a destruction derby game is here — a variety of tracks and arenas, a points system that requires players to race as well as damage opponents, and the ability to customize and save cars to a garage. There is even a very cool battle mode in which the action takes place on skyscraper rooftops! The control is more realistic than you might expect, meaning you'll have to let up on the gas and brake around turns, but for fans of wrecking racing, DD Raw is the pinnacle.

SCORE 96 GOLD

Dino Crisis 2

Genre Action/Adventure | Publisher Capcom | Developer Capcom
Origin Japan | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

Many critics faulted the original Dino Crisis for playing too much like Resident Evil. However, as a big RE fan, I enjoyed the similar "survival horror" theme featuring dinosaurs instead of zombies.

In Dino Crisis 2, Capcom has changed directions. Gone are the brain teasers, replaced by simple "find the key" puzzles. The storyline features fewer CG cinemas and less dialogue, and although you can now play as two different characters, you merely "tag team" between them depending on who is able to open a particular locked door. DC's experiment with 3D environments was abandoned, so the action in Dino Crisis 2 takes place against detailed pre-rendered backgrounds — most of them outdoors. Finally, by destroying the dinosaurs that constantly attack your characters, you are awarded "extinction points" which can be used to purchase better things.

With these changes, DC2 plays like an arcade-style shooter and thereby distinguishes itself from the Resident Evil series. Personally, I think the use of pre-rendered backgrounds is better suited to exploration-style games than shoot 'em ups. Nevertheless, DC2 is a great experience.

SCORE 95 GOLD

The World Is Not Enough

Genre Shooter | Publisher EA Games | Developer Black Ops
Origin USA | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

After the dismal Tomorrow Never Dies, we were apprehensive about TWINE — especially since the movie it was based upon wasn't one of the best Bond films. Fortunately, TWINE distances itself from its predecessor by unabashedly emulating the N64 Goldeneye game.

All the weapons and gadgetry we have come to expect from 007 are at the player's disposal, the familiar movie theme is present, and there are numerous clips from the film and voice-overs from sound alikes and a few main characters. TWINE consists of 11 levels of varying size and complexity from pursuing a terrorist to quadrupling your money at blackjack (I'm not kidding). Sometimes stealth is required, and other times... well, let's just say you get to use that famous "license."

There are some clipping problems and dropped polygons, as well as collision detection issues which often make stunning an enemy more difficult than necessary. In addition, the multiplayer contest which was a big part of Goldeneye's success is M.I.A. With more levels, and fewer glitches, it might have given Medal of Honor a run for its money. Still, it is one of the better PlayStation shooters.

SCORE 90 GOLD

Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2

Genre Action | Publisher Activision | Developer Neversoft
Origin U.S. | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

The original Pro Skater wasn't a copy of someone else's popular title, or a concept licensed from a movie, but an original idea that has now spawned many knock-offs. It wasn't that anyone had ever tried to do a skateboarding game before, but no one had done it right. When you performed tricks, you really got into a zen-like rhythm. Then there was the thrill of exploration as you cruised through deserted malls and schoolyards, and innovation as you found the perfect spots to perform tricks. Add a cool multiplayer game, and modern music from popular bands, and it's no wonder the game sold a bajillion copies.

So, how do you improve upon perfection? Well, you can't. But you can add a few new things to keep people happy. Like a mode that lets you build your own custom skate park, new music from Rage Against the Machine and Naughty By Nature, and, of course, new levels, characters, and tricks to perform.

If you hated Pro Skater, the sequel won't convert you. But, then again, if you hated Pro Skater, you probably hate life. From landing a 900 to bailing from a subway track, this is one fantastic game!

SCORE 98

Cool Boarders 2001

Genre Sports | Publisher SCEA | Developer Idol Minds
Origin USA | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

With sharp graphics, simple controls and lots of variety, this may be just the wintry diversion that virtual snowboarders need until they make the leap to SSX on the PS2.

Visually, the Cool Boarders series reaches a peak with 2001, featuring beautiful snow and outdoor lighting effects. Even more impressive are the gorgeous backgrounds, which really give you a sense of altitude and distance. Only the occasionally jittery camera keeps things from looking as smooth as they could. There are numerous single and multiplayer modes to keep you challenged for days, while the variety of events and courses ensures replay value. There's also a cool character editor that lets you design your own boarder, including a neat height-adjustment feature.

However, the game does have a few flaws. The main issue is touchy steering, which can make lining up rail rides especially frustrating. It also feels as if the snow doesn't offer much resistance. Better implementation of the vibration function could have added a lot more realism to the overall control feel.

SCORE 88

MegaMan Legends 2

Genre Action/RPG | Publisher Capcom | Developer Capcom
Origin Japan | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

The sequel to MegaMan Legends has finally arrived, but only true fans of the brave boy in blue are likely to rave about his latest adventure.

In MegaMan Legends 2, our hero teams up with a girl named Roll to discover the secret of the mysterious "Mother Lode" on Forbidden Island. Can MegaMan reach the deadly island and succeed where others have failed? Is the "Mother Lode" really an alternate energy source that can save the planet? To find out, you'll again have to defeat MegaMan's arch-nemesis, Tron Bonne. You'll also have to beat an army of Reaverbots in all shapes and sizes, using your trusty Buster and other weapons you can create.

MML2 combines action and RPG elements into a linear adventure that surpasses the original without any true innovations. The story unfolds through a series of cut-scenes, with action and exploration segments in between. Unfortunately, the controls feel a little sticky at times, and it's a pain having to always rotate the camera to find the best view. Plus, while the graphics are colorful, there's still distracting draw-in during gameplay sequences. Rent it unless you're a big fan.

SCORE 83

Army Men: Air Attack 2

Genre Shooter | Publisher 3DO | Developer 3DO
Origin U.S. | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

Of all the PSX Army Men games, the Air Attack series is probably the best. That's because it compares favorably with other games in its genre, whereas Sarge's Heroes and Army Men 3D can't hold a candle to Metal Gear Solid or Syphon Filter.

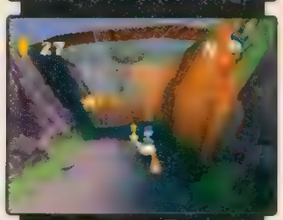
Still, to convince people to play a game featuring plastic toys instead of something more realistic, you've got to have a hook. Air Attack 2's "hook" is that the helicopter-based missions take place in "real-world" settings, which means that everyday household and garden items are weapons or obstacles. The problem is, this gimmick is getting old. Toy Commander, a Dreamcast game, took the Army Men: Air Attack concept to perfection, but the PS One isn't capable of that kind of graphic realism. So, instead, we're limited to run-of-the-mill air-to-air and surface-to-air combat with a few large scale items thrown in. Why not stick to EA's more realistic Strike series?

New to the sequel is the ability to swing and launch items using the winch, as well as some fun multiplayer challenges. Both are improvements, but neither elevate the game from the original. It's still just your average combat shooter.

SCORE 84

Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers

Genre Action/Platform | Publisher Ubi/Disney | Developer Ubisoft
Origin China | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available December



Donald Duck is full of beautiful scenery and impressive animation. Unfortunately, the gameplay is very derivative — call it "Quack Bandicoot." Goin' Quackers switches between side-scrolling levels and levels where Donald is either running away from or towards the camera. Settings such as a forest, city, haunted mansion, and temple aren't exactly original either, no matter how great they look.

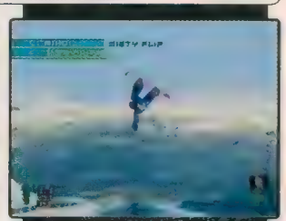
Donald's moves are limited to a jump and kick, which make the game feel even more old-fashioned. Stars are collected along the course to earn extra lives. There are three goals in every level: find an orb and make it to the end, recover three lost toys, and return to beat the record time. After you've completed the four main levels in each world, you'll confront a Boss. With only four worlds, it doesn't take too long to finish.

Had the game been released in 1996-97, it would have been rated higher. It still looks wonderful, but at this late stage in the PlayStation's life, audiences are expecting more gameplay. Unless you're a die-hard Donald fan, Goin' Quakers is best suited for the pre-teen crowd.

SCORE 88

MTV Sports Pure Ride

Genre Sports | Publisher THQ | Developer Radical
Origin Canada | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!



If you're looking for a good snowboarding game to help you while away the winter months, do a 180 and stay away from MTV Sports Pure Ride. The game offers a decent amount of substance, but there's very little style to make it worthwhile.

At best, Pure Ride looks like a second-generation title, with ugly textures, dull colors, blocky graphics and rough animations, all loosely tied together by a sputtering framerate. The backgrounds are hazy and bland, and even the snow is a drab shade of gray. Maybe the boring visuals could have been overlooked if Pure Ride delivered in the gameplay department, but such is not the case. Despite an abundance of play modes and a fairly decent level editor, there's not much else to hold gamers' interest. The controls are adequate, but landing can be a bit frustrating. On the other hand, the challenge level is ridiculously easy — to score big points, you can simply do the same trick over and over again. And what's with the lame music? You'd expect better from a game with the MTV label!

All in all, Cool Boarders 2001 is a more polished title that is far worthier of your consideration.

SCORE 76

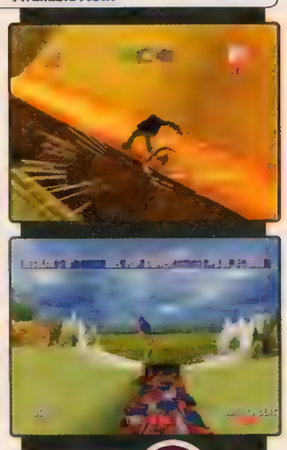
MTV Sports: Skateboarding

Genre Sports | Publisher THQ | Developer Dark Black
Origin USA | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

Since imitation is the most sincere form of flattery, it's no surprise that every skateboarding game nowadays tries to be the next Tony Hawk's Pro Skater. The same goes for MTV Sports: Skateboarding. The developers have drawn significant inspiration from Activision's benchmark title — but they've also set themselves up for some pretty tough comparisons.

At first, THQ's release seems to hold up well against the stiff competition. The game offers many different modes, including Freeplay, Lifestyle, MTV Hunt, Survival, Stunt Mode and Multiplayer. There are also a ton of real skateboarders available, including headliner Andy Macdonald. Plus, there are more than 35 levels to skate, several of which seem directly "inspired" by THPS.

In other words, there's plenty to do, and the challenge level is high — but almost too high, at times. For instance, in Lifestyle mode, the game tells you to stay on your board and gives you low scores even after you do flawless runs. Go figure! The controls also aren't as intuitive as they could be, and while the graphics are good, they're definitely not as smooth as THPS.



SCORE 84 — Silver

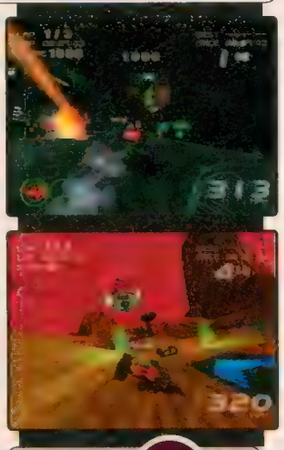
Rollcage Stage 2

Genre Racing | Publisher Midway | Developer Attention to Detail
Origin UK | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

Before playing the sequel, I fired up the original Rollcage to refresh my memory. The fact that I had to double-check to see which game I was playing gives you a good idea of what kind of a game Stage 2 is. Everything I liked about the first game — breakneck speed, driving on the sides of tunnel walls, beautiful graphics, and knocking signs and buildings down onto the track — has been retained. On the other hand, those things which bothered me — short tracks and the ease at which the vehicles could get turned around — are still here.

Admittedly, Stage 2 looks more polished, and the multiplayer game now includes a battle mode, but it is still easy to confuse the two. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, unless you are getting tired of the futuristic racing genre or are looking for innovation.

Like its predecessor, Rollcage Stage 2 is a challenging game that evokes memories of Psygnosis' Wipeout. Both are arcade-style racers utilizing weapons in futuristic settings. It isn't for everyone, however, as the unique ability to drive on every surface leads to moments of extreme disorientation and the feeling of not always being in control.



SCORE 86 — Silver

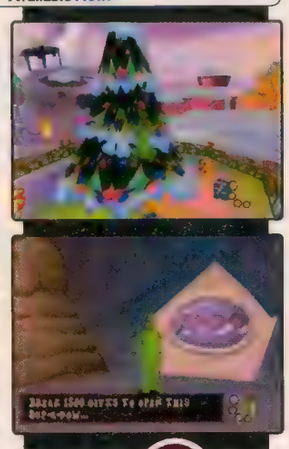
The Grinch

Genre Platform | Publisher Konami | Developer Universal
Origin Canad | Format a | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

The mean-spirited Grinch is out to ruin Christmas for the residents of Whoville in this promising new platformer from Konami. However, while the game captures the offbeat feel of the Dr. Seuss universe, there are too many glitches to add it to your wish list.

On the positive side, The Grinch features clever rhymes, whimsical music and colorful graphics that bring the green meanie to life. While controlling the Grinch, players can use his bad breath and butt smash to fend off enemies and accomplish different missions. Some of your tasks in Whoville include smashing all the Christmas presents, painting the mayor's posters, launching rotten eggs into houses and mixing up the mail. Plus, you'll have to find your scattered blueprints to build helpful gadgets, including a rotten egg launcher, a slime shooter, a Grinch copter and more.

Players also can switch to the Grinch's canine sidekick, Max, to fit into small spaces. However, Max doesn't do much except bark, so this seems like an afterthought. The fun is also spoiled by frustrating controls, software bugs and annoyingly repetitive elements, like the little brats who won't leave you alone.



SCORE 81 — Silver

Resident Evil: Survivor

Genre Shoot | Publisher Capcom | Developer Capcom
Origin Japan | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

Capcom released six different versions of their three PlayStation Resident Evil games, and yet the public's interest never waned. When it came to this series, it seemed as if Capcom could do no wrong. Until now!

A first-person shooter set in the RE universe sounds good on paper, but it didn't turn out so well in practice. While the game includes familiar enemies such as zombies, dogs, spiders, and mutated humans, it leaves out everything else which made the original titles so popular. Players control an amnesia victim as he wanders through an unnamed city. Even with a twist, it is hardly an epic story, and there is little connection to the characters we know. Now take away the excellent CG cinema scenes, keep the lame voice acting and poor translation, toss out any semblance of puzzle solving, and there is nothing left for the fans.

The graphics are shabby and the control scheme is unfriendly. Worse, since you cannot save your progress except after dying, you must play the whole thing in one sitting. If you care about RE, just pretend this game never happened.

SCORE 59 — Tin

Team Buddies

Genre Strategy | Publisher Midway | Developer Psygnosis
Origin UK | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

Don't let the cartoon look fool you! Underneath Team Buddies colorful exterior beats the heart of a real-time strategy game, and a difficult one at that!

Granted, the game is not as sophisticated as Command and Conquer. You can only control up to four soldiers at one time, and you cannot create structures: only weapons and replacement soldiers. The mission objectives are far more simplistic as well, and can be generally categorized as retrieval, offensive, or defensive operations. Nevertheless, you'll have to learn resource management and strategize as if you were playing a more serious game. Do you need more soldiers to protect your base, or do you need more weapons? Should you send troops to attack the enemy base to prevent them from creating reinforcements, or do you need those troops to shield you as you attempt to carry out your mission?

Using a multi-tap, up to four players can battle simultaneously in a variety of fast and furious multiplayer games. If the proliferation of 3DO's Army Men series hasn't totally dampened your enthusiasm for combat games with a humorous edge, Team Buddies just might rekindle your interest.

SCORE 93 — Gold

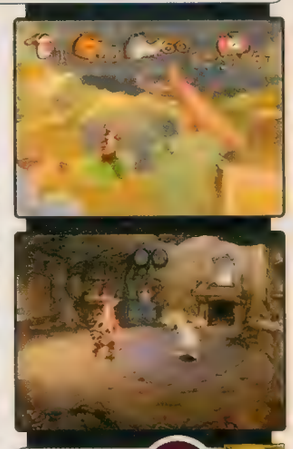
Tigger's Honey Hunt

Genre Platform | Publisher NewKidCo | Developer DoldDenld
Origin Japan | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

Last year, New Kid Co. released two early childhood PlayStation games which had the dubious distinction of being more expensive and less educational than their PC counterparts. Undaunted, they're back with a game staring Disney's trouncy, flouncy, bouncy tiger.

Tigger's Adventure isn't an educational game at all, but it is definitely geared towards younger children. The main character has but two moves-jump and duck — and the main goal of the game is to collect "hunny" pots. Along the way, Tigger must retrieve items for familiar friends such as Eeyore, Rabbit, and Roo. There are mini-games such as a simplified version of Simon says, a photo album to view pictures found throughout the game, and even clips from the various Winnie the Pooh animated shorts.

The action takes place in two dimensions, but the characters are fully polygonal and the background graphics are absolutely wonderful. The game really captures the old-fashioned storybook look of the Hundred Acre Wood. Some of the jumps are pretty difficult to make, even for an adult, but otherwise it is hard to find anything to criticize.

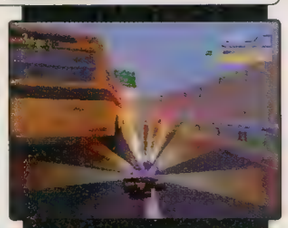


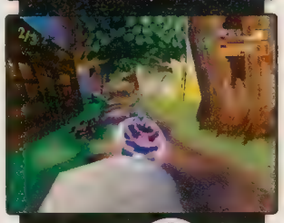
SCORE 90 — Gold

Tyco R/C: Assault with a Battery

EVERYONE E

Genre Racing | Publisher Mattel | Developer Lucky Chicken
Origin US | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!





A favorite theory of my fellow editors is that every great videogame since the Nintendo era has had a chicken in it. Unfortunately, even the inclusion of chicken mini-game loading screens isn't enough to elevate Tyco R/C to the realm of greatness.

Once you get past the first track, which blatantly copies Mario Kart 64, the courses become better looking and more interesting. Still, the settings-including a junkyard, beach, and snowy mountain-are nothing we haven't seen before. While the majority are circuits, a few of them require players to make a U-turns at each end. Although short in length, most tracks feature environmental hazards which can be triggered by driving over switches. Power-ups include mines, missiles, and shields, as well as a power-drain which must be passed off like a hot potato. There are also two exclusive multiplayer games: a battle mode and a "tag" game in one of six unique arenas.

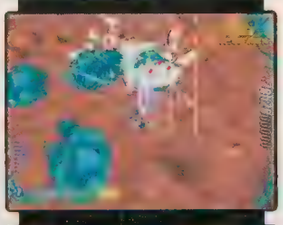
Although Tyco R/C delivers a fun arcade-style experience, it is a little rough around the edges graphically, the camera tilts a little too much for my tastes.

SCORE 85

RayCrisis: Series Termination

EVERYONE E

Genre Action | Publisher Spaz | Developer Taito
Origin Japan | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!



Ray Crisis: Series Termination is the follow-up to Raystorm. Shooters are scarce in this day and age, so hardcore fans tend to snap them up whenever they appear. Ray Crisis doesn't offer much in the way of new and improved gameplay, yet it features some quirky options of its own. As a polygonal shooter, it features beautiful large 3D backgrounds as well as gorgeous lighting effects. Like its predecessor, you'll choose from a few different ships with main and special "lock-on" weapon capabilities. While it's short on game modes — offering only two: Original and Special — it does offer substantial gameplay. Original mode allows you to choose three areas to battle through, while Special gives you one ship, no continues, and a pre-selected amount of areas to traverse. In this mode, if you're diligent enough, you can gain additional ships. Boss battles feature incredible-looking mechanized vehicles and, while there is some slowdown during these battles (because of the amount of bullets on-screen) you'll probably find yourself very happy that they exist. Ray Crisis offers decent twitch appeal, though gameplay is standard. It doesn't, however, feature the two player mode of it's predecessor, a curious omission.

SCORE 85 SILVER

Ultimate Fighting Championship

TEEN T

Genre Fighting | Publisher Crave | Developer Opus
Origin U.S. | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

UFC puts you in control of over 20 fighters using strictly real-life techniques. The roster includes Kickboxers, Sumo's, Greco-Roman wrestlers, etc. No fireballs here! You can also create your own fighter from scratch, then put him through his paces in training mode. Here you'll gain points to apply towards attributes and learn additional moves. The main modes pit you in a tournament to become the UFC Champion where you'll then have to successfully defend the title. Control is Tekken-style, with a button assigned to each arm and leg. Fighters can launch a variety of attacks while standing, as well as tackle their opponent to the ground and attempt to pummel their way to victory or apply a submission hold. On the defense, you can attempt to reverse tackles and ground moves.

UFC isn't a fighter you can jump right into. You'll need to spend time learning the attack and counter system, or you'll find yourself losing very quickly. It's also a bit more grainy and unpolished graphically than many of the top tier fighters. What it does have is depth, and if you are looking for long-term replayability, looking at UFC would be a good move.

SCORE 83 SILVER

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX

EVERYONE E

Genre Racing | Publisher Acclaim | Developer Z-Axis
Origin USA | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX is one of the coolest games I've had the pleasure of playing. It's easily one of the best games this year, and when all is said and done, it may be on my Top 10 All-Time PlayStation list!

What makes the game so great? Fluid controls and tons of tricks and combos. The replay value is huge, and much like Tony Hawk you may not put the controls down once for a month after you start playing. There are a bunch of gameplay modes, but it's all about the Proquest, where you unlock the tracks, bikes, and gear. I've been playing this game for three months, and still enjoy it as much now as I did back then. The tracks are really well designed, and just when you think you've seen it all, you'll pull big air and find or see something new! There are 12 levels in all, and they vary in terms of dirt, street, and vert environments. What's more, there are even ten different multi-player games, and a soundtrack that includes Sublime, Social Distortion, and others! If you haven't done so already, go grab a copy of Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX today!

SCORE 96 GOLD

Mike Tyson Boxing

TEEN T

Genre Sports | Publisher Codemasters | Developer Codemasters
Origin UK | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

Codemasters run of publishing their own games here in the States may come to a swift end if they continue to rely on products like Mike Tyson Boxing. Sheesh, where to begin? Let's start with the simplistic idea of "fun." Ok, scratch that one off the list — there's nothing fun about this game. How about smooth control? Nope, that's nowhere to be found, either. Maybe it's a sim and I'm just not getting it? No, way too many arcade-like touches to qualify as a sim. Must be an arcade game then, right? Well, arcade games are, by definition, supposed to be fun and quick-paced. Since Mike Tyson Boxing is neither fun nor quick, then you can simply throw your hands up in the air and say "forget about it." The graphics are decent enough, and the sound F/X are pretty good (except the annoying "warning" buzzer before a KO), but the overall package is average. Codemasters put a lot of thought into the details and gameplay options, but suffering through the sluggish controls and haphazard gameplay controls hamper any desire you may have had to play this game past its rental return date.

SCORE 70 BRONZE

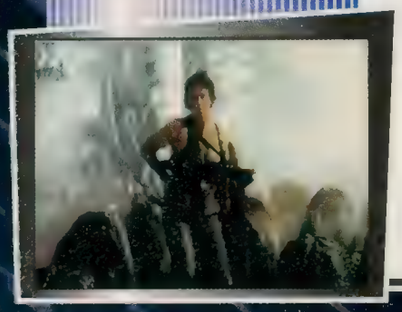
WCW Backstage Assault

TEEN T

Genre Wrestling | Publisher EA | Developer Kodiak
Origin U.S. | Format CD | # of Discs 1 | Available Now!

As the name implies, fighting is all done backstage. There are a variety of locations: parking lots, bathrooms, storage rooms, lockers, etc., containing a variety of weapons. You can even rip items off of walls to pummel your opponent. Rooms vary in size, some allowing you to climb onto items to execute diving attacks, and you can travel between rooms. Commentary continues to be a high point this year, with even more tightly integrated dialogue regarding the onscreen happenings than last year's effort. But things begin to break down. While the areas and rooms are modeled very well, the wrestlers themselves look horrible. The control system seems worse than last year, with wrestlers that move awkwardly and often refuse to follow commands. Game modes — where are they? Three levels of difficulty make up attempts to gain various WCW belts (no storylines), a Vs. mode with only a few paltry options, and a much-improved create-a-wrestler system round out the options. As you proceed through the Belt modes, you can satisfy conditions to unlock additional wrestlers and moves. Backstage Assault does feature a large roster when all is said and done, but in too many ways it is inferior to its predecessor.

SCORE 75 BRONZE



Aliens: Special Edition

20th Century Fox **154 Minutes** **THX Certified • Dolby Digital • Widescreen • Rated R**

Beyond the Star Wars and Indiana Jones series, the Alien movies (more specifically Aliens), have always been on our DVD wish lists. For quite some time, a special Director's Cut, which included 17 minutes of restored footage that had been left on the cutting room floor, had been available to the ten people out there who owned Laser Disc players. After a few years of whining and complaining, Fox finally got off their duffs and gave us the whole series (Alien, Aliens, Alien 3, Alien Resurrection) on DVD format back in June of last year. This action-packed sequel to the more slower-paced and suspenseful original brought back Sigourney Weaver as Ripley, the only survivor from mankind's first encounter with the monstrous Alien. Found floating in space 35 years later, her account of the Alien and the fate of her crew are received with skepticism — until the mysterious disappearance of colonists on LV-426, the very place where she first encountered the creature. Now she is forced to return to LV-426, with a team of high-tech colonial marines in order to investigate the situation and find out what has happened.

Over and above that, this is still an amazing movie and an instant classic. The DVD version has so many cool features and extra stuff packed on it that it shouldn't be missed at any cost. To start, it has the extra 17 minutes of restored footage found on the Laser Disc, which includes a brief explanation of what happens to Newt and her parents before Ripley arrives.

Rating:

Blade Runner: Director's Cut

Warner Brothers **117 Minutes** **Dolby Digital • Fullscreen and Widescreen • Rated R**

Before its DVD release (August, '97), The Director's Cut of Blade Runner was the holy grail of Laser Discs. The original Blade Runner featured ludicrous and redundant voice-over narration from Harrison Ford (who later confessed that he thought if he did it badly, they wouldn't use it) and a phony happy ending (much to the disgust of Director Ridley Scott, who fought with the studio to leave his original cut untouched). Thankfully, 11 years later, he finally got his wish and the movie was re-released in its original form as a Director's Cut. Besides the omission of Deckard's (Ford) narration and the removal of the "uplifting" finale, there is a bit more character development and a brief unicorn vision that suggests Deckard may be a humanoid.

Praised for its dark and brooding futuristic vision of Los Angeles, the movie revolves around Rick Deckard, a 21st-century "Blade Runner", who must track down and kill genetically-made criminal replicants. The movie, which also stars Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, Edward James Olmos and even Darryl Hannah, is a must-have for science-fiction buffs and Harrison Ford fans. While the DVD doesn't have much in the way of extras, there are interactive menus, production notes and both widescreen and standard full-screen formats on the disc.

Rating:

FINAL WORD

David Jon Winding • Publisher

ON THE OUTSIDE, LOOKING IN

I am sure that, if you were one of the unlucky ones that got tossed off of a pre-order list for your PS2, you are not a real happy guy right now. That's right, I said "guy." In spite of the so-out-of-touch-it-hurts ISDA's assurances that 43% of all people that play video games are women (take Solitaire for Windows out of the equation and it drops back to the traditional 8%), video gaming is still pretty much a man's world, until sales tell us otherwise.

Anyway, you might be comforted to know that I too was bumped when Sony cut their initial shipment in half. Gamestop, the on-line division of Babbage's, etc., nailed me. Funny thing is, I pre-ordered a unit from EBworld.com in June, a month after my pre-order was placed with Gamestop — and EB has confirmed that I am getting my unit from them at launch. I know for a fact that both chains' allocations were similar. I guess an 8 year old with $300 to spend at Funcoland gets his before me. I mean, how many people had the forethought to pre-book in May? I guarantee you that there are political shenanigans at work. Needless to say, I won't be shopping at Gamestop in the future.

With so many of you getting short-sheeted, and facing the unknown in terms of if and when you will get the call from your pre-order retailer, I thought you might be interested (since you have no new hardware to play around with) in looking at the problems facing third party software publishers — for no other reason than to know that the suffering is not limited to you alone.

There are 26 PS2 titles that will be available on October 26 ("were available" by the time you read this - I'm writing this column on October 16), and another 25 or so that will ship by the end of the year. That's a total of 50+ games for a system that, at best, will have an installed base of a little over one million units by the year 2001! If you do the math (and you know all of the third party publishers have been), that means there is one new title for every 20,000 PS2 owners this year. Or, put into terms that software publishers deal in (assuming an aggressive, launch consumer type software tie ratio of 5 software titles purchased for every one unit of hardware sold), an average game on PS2 this holiday season will sell 100,000 units.

Most of these games will retail for $50, with a wholesale price of approximately $35 paid to the third party publisher. This means that the average income to the publisher for the title will be in the neighborhood of $3.5 million. Sony takes $9/unit MANUFACTURED (not sold-through). In the case of many of the bigger titles, the publishers are manufacturing upwards of 400,000 units. Follow my hand... this means that they have already lost money BEFORE you take into account development and marketing costs ($3-5 million for development, $3-5/unit for marketing). Of course, this assumes that the titles won't become major hits, but most of them won't — and I can assure you that there will be no ties that are in the 50-100% range.

What the third party publishers are hoping for is that the additional 2 million units that SCEA is projecting to ship before March 31, 2001 actually materialize at retail, that they are purchased by consumers and that these new consumers will somehow remember to buy their six month-old games. Of course, there will be an additional 50 titles shipping in the first half of 2001!

So, you see — other people are feeling the pain, right in their wallets. You may be (in the short term) out of the best gaming experience going, but the guys that bring you the games are set to take a major hit. Next holiday season, all will be well. But, this Christmas, while Santa will be wearing red, the video game industry will be bleeding it.

Dave

dwinding@psextreme.com

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PlayStation 2

RELEASE DATE: PLAYSTATION 2 LAUNCH

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DELIVER AT ALL COSTS

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- Compete head-to-head or run "pick up and deliver" missions against AI opponents or in full multiplayer mode.
- Maneuver your way through arid desert, icy tundra, or rocky mountain forest.
- Real Time Damage Models allow you to watch the parts fly as you pay the price for punishing collisions!

SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE ON GUIDANCE RECORDINGS

9 ROCKSTAR 575BWY 10 ROCKSTAR 575BWY 11 ROCKSTAR 575BWY 9 ROCKSTAR 575BWY

9 9A 10 10A 11 11A 9 9A

THEY'RE
BIGGER,
FASTER,
SMARTER.
AND RIGHT
BEHIND YOU.
DINO CRISIS 2
Yes, Regina is back in the action-packed sequel to the blockbuster survival-horror hit. Sent in for search and rescue, she is now armed with even more dino-fighting, heavy artillery. Only Regina is prepared for the adrenaline-pumping battles the recon team will soon encounter. More action! More intensity! More prehistoric predators! One question remains... are you the hunter – or the hunted?
MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Blood and Gore
Animated Violence
PlayStation
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